

THE
CATHOLIC MISSIONARY.
IN
TE WAHI POUNAMU.

Susan Clarke
1929.

FOREWORD.

The object of this work is to depict the life of pioneer missionaries in a new and remote country. It may help those who live in an age of comparative comfort to realise the hardships endured by those who came to "sow the good seed" in these southern lands.

It will serve also to show the generous support given by the original settlers to the building and maintenance of their schools and churches.

Beyond the few chapters dealing with Westland in Mr. Wilson's book, "The Catholic Church in New Zealand", there is no other written record of the progress of the Catholic Church on the West Coast of the South Island.

Limited as is the scope of the present work, it has entailed a good deal of research owing to the fact that at very few of the centres have diaries or annals of Church activities been written. This is accounted for by the fact that the strenuous work of our first missionaries allowed them scarcely any time for church work. They were busy making history; they had no time to write it.

The New Zealand "Tablet", the chief Catholic newspaper of the Dominion has been of assistance. The "West Coast Times" which dates as far back as 1865 and the "Grey River

"Argus" dating from 1866 have also chronicled some of the chief events. To the files of these three newspapers I had access.

Best of all some of the pioneer Catholics, active church-workers in the olden days, are still with us. They love to revisit in spirit the haunts where once they helped to build the little church and where they welcomed with song or farewelled with tears this or that good priest of the early days.

Accurate information as to the dates of the arrival and the departure of the various missionaries, I obtained from the Marist Year Book, 1927, which contains a short biography of all the early missionaries of the Marist Order.

Owing to the limited time at my disposal, I have been forced to make use of the art of arts - that of omission; the present condition of the Catholic Church in Westland could be treated more fully and incidents that would give added interest could be included, were it possible to protract the writing of the thesis over a longer period.

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REMINISCENCES OF:-

- | | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Mr. Duggan, | Camaru. |
| Mr. Millar | Runanga. |
| Miss Mary Kennedy, | Greymouth. |
| Mr. Mooney | Greymouth. |
| Mrs. Burke. | Greymouth. |
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Chapter. 1.WHY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CAME TO NEW ZEALAND.A DIVINE COMMAND.

If we go back in imagination some two thousand years, we may place ourselves on a mountain in Galilee, and there we may hear a command issued to a group of eleven ignorant men.

The speaker is none other than Jesus Christ, the hearers are His eleven apostles and the words are those recorded in Saint Matthew's Gospel - last three verses of the last chapter - bidding the timid apostles to go and teach all nations and to instruct them to observe all practises commanded by Christ.

This simple command changed the face of the civilized world. It sent missionaries to every land where it was necessary to carry the glad tidings and it had its echo when in 1838 the Right Reverend Jean Baptiste Francois Pompallier, commissioned by Pope Gregory XVI set out from his beloved France on a long and weary ocean voyage for the then little known shores of New Zealand.

This commission which dispersed the seed of the Gospel from the mountain of Galilee brought the Catholic missionaries to rugged Westland, where, if there were no great numbers of Maoris to instruct in the elements of Christianity, there were faithful sons of the Catholic Church to be reminded to observe all things commanded and to avail themselves of those means of Sanctification left by Christ, to be administered by His priests.

Chapter. 11

HOW THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CAME TO NEW ZEALAND.

"To millions in darkness it was thine to give light,
 That light which will never decay,
 The Gospel soon banished idolatry's night,
 And Christians basked in its ray."

Hymn to Saint Patrick.

Out far away in the ocean where the Roman horizon became merged into the twilight of a fable, a little island sheltered its bright green grass under a canopy of cloud, surrounded by the wild weird waters of a then mysterious sea. It was Ireland.

Many are the vicissitudes of fortune through which the island has passed since the Roman legions retraced their steps. Still, she has living spiritual memories. The trophies of her conquests have not decayed. Her monuments are the living nations whose faith she has founded, fostered or revived. The map of Europe is her book. Her letters are the Christian lives ^{of the races} whose apostles were her Saints.

Thomas Poynton, the first Catholic settler in New Zealand, was one of her worthy sons, and it was in answer to his many petitions for spiritual help, that steps were taken to send the first Catholic missionaries to our shores.

Mr. Poynton arrived in Hokianga in 1828 to take charge of a store and sawing station. In a narrative which he dictated in 1890 he states - "In the latter end of 1828 I arrived in Hokianga. I brought with me a young wife, a Catholic, and in the course of time God gave us a daughter. My wife took the

child to Sydney, a distance of one thousand miles, to be baptized by the Reverend Father Therry, and then my wife and child returned to Hokianga. In the course of two years more, my wife had another child, a boy, and this time, in like manner, my wife took it to be baptized by Father Therry."

When Mr. Poynton heard of the appointment of a Bishop to Australia, he set out for Sydney in the hope of securing a priest to evangelize New Zealand and to look after the scattered families of Irish Catholics who had begun to settle there. Alas! The clergy were too few even for the Sydney spiritual harvest. Catholic books and an exhortation were as much as he could receive.

Again he went on the same mission, and yet again. On the occasion of the third visit to Sydney, the news was more cheering. With heart rejoicing, Mr. Poynton now returned to Hokianga and a few weeks later he had the consolation of welcoming to his home the first Bishop and missionaries destined to reap the spiritual harvest in New Zealand.

Chapter. 111.

THE COMMISSION OF BISHOP POMPALLIER.

1

In Saint Patrick's Church at Manly, Sydney, there are still preserved the original manuscripts of three very important documents. One is that of the letter addressed to Mr. Poynton by John Bede Polding, Bishop of New Holland (Australia), urging him to exhort the Catholic settlers to continue in the faith until the arrival of a Catholic priest.

The others are the commendatory letters addressed by Bishop Polding, Bishop of New Holland, and by Father McEnroe, Archdeacon of Saint Patrick's Church, Sydney, to Mr. Poynton to prepare the way for Bishop Pompallier.

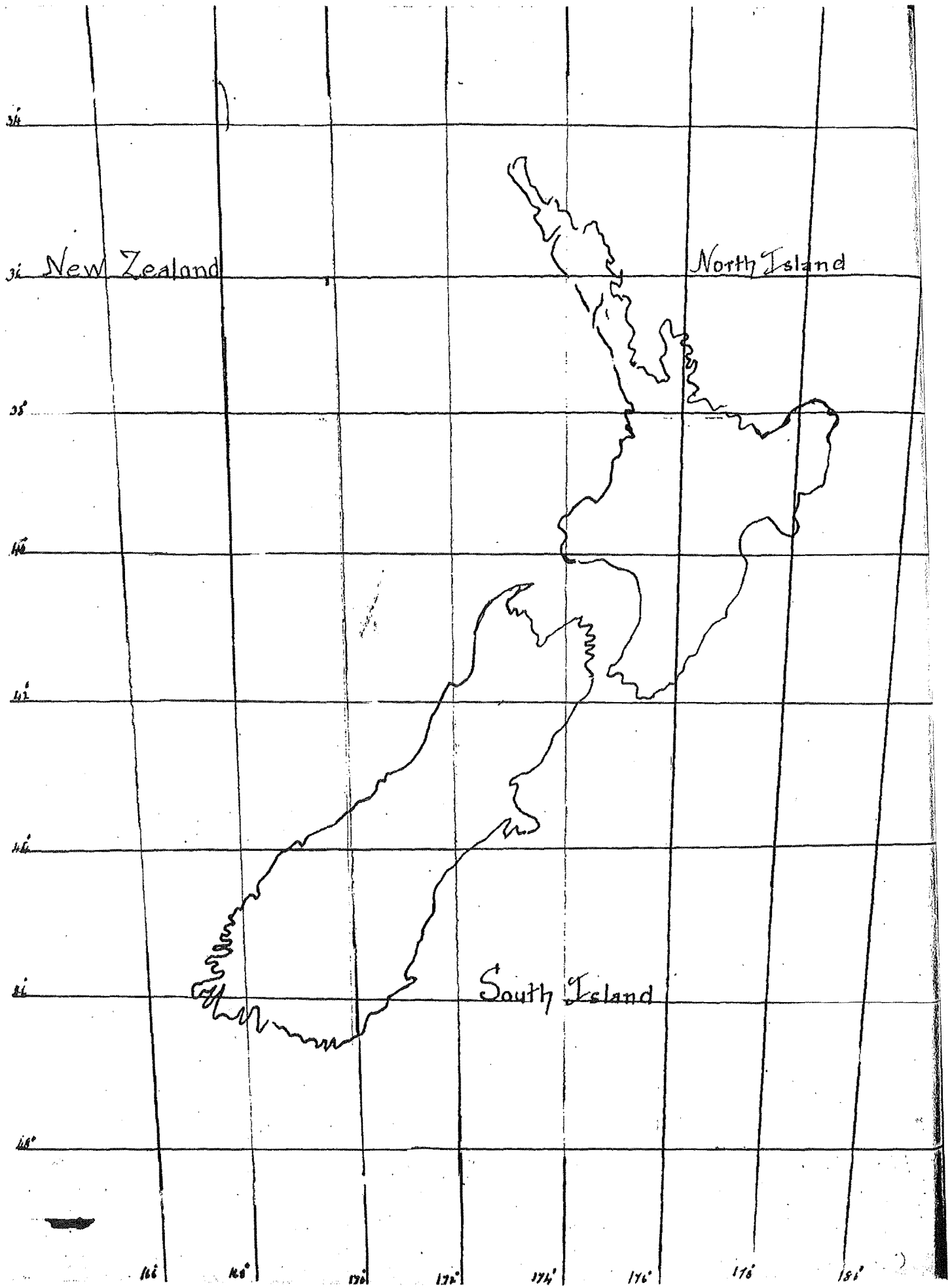
After giving detailed instruction on certain points the Bishop goes on to say "In a word I place your good Bishop and his assistants under your care with full confidence that you will use all means possible to promote their comfort and the objects for which they have left all - their country, their friends, their homes, to convert the souls of the natives to the true faith, and to give you and other Catholics settled in New Zealand, the means of practising your religious duties.

How the first object was attained by the Bishop, by his French priests Fathers Servant, Comte, Pesant, and by his Irish priests Fathers O'Rourke, O'Reilly, McDonald (Father Walter the Apostle of the Maoris) is not the theme of the present work.

1. Cardinal Moran; "History of the Church in Australasia."
Page 895. Sydney 1910.

More particularly are we concerned in Westland with the second object, and the results which are visible throughout the land, best show how those early missionaries fulfilled their task.

Before we proceed with the history of the establishment of the Church in Westland we cannot do better than give a geographical and historical outline of the district where toiled those zealous soldiers of the Cross - the pioneer priests.



Chapter. 1V

Historical Sketch.

1

The Dutch East India Company which had its headquarters in Java desired to extend its influence as far South as possible. Its members thought that New Holland (Australia) might possibly continue southward as a great Antarctic continent.

The Company sent out Abel Janszoon Tasman as captain, and Francis Jacobzoon Visscher as pilot major, of an exploring expedition. Their ships were the *Freehan*, of 100 tons, and the *Heemskerk*, of 60 tons.

On their way Tasman sighted a new land, which he named Van Diemen's Land in honour of the Governor-General who had sent out his expedition.

Nearly at the end of 1642, Tasman sighted the western ranges of the Southern Alps. Some think that it was the high land between Hokitika and Okarito that he first saw. Be that as it may, it can be seen, in spite of the dry, matter-of-fact entries in his log-book, that Westland impressed him. He notes that the mountains seemed lifted aloft in the air. He coasted cautiously northward, noting the high, cloud-capped double range of mountains and the emptiness of the steep, desolate coast, where neither smoke nor men, neither ships nor boats, were to be seen.

1. W.F. Reeves: "Long White Cloud". Page 75. London
2nd. edition 1924.

7.

Thus, for the first time, Westland met the gaze of Europeans. Not for a period of 127 years was the world destined to gain any further information concerning its rugged shores.

2.

In 1770, Captain James Cook commanded an expedition equipped by the Imperial Government of England, at the request of the Royal Geographical Society, which desired to make accurate observations of the transit of Venus, visible in the Southern Hemisphere in 1769. George III had already interested himself in maritime exploration and joined with the Admiralty in seizing the opportunity which the scientific event offered, to peer further into the unknown regions of the South Pacific.

Having duly noted the transit of Venus, at Otaheite (Tahiti), the expedition sailed south-westward till it sighted the New Zealand Coast on October 7th, 1769.

Early in 1770, Captain Cook sailed from Queen Charlotte's Sound down to the Bluff, and coming up the West Coast, sighted³ "Aorangi", naming it Mount Cook.

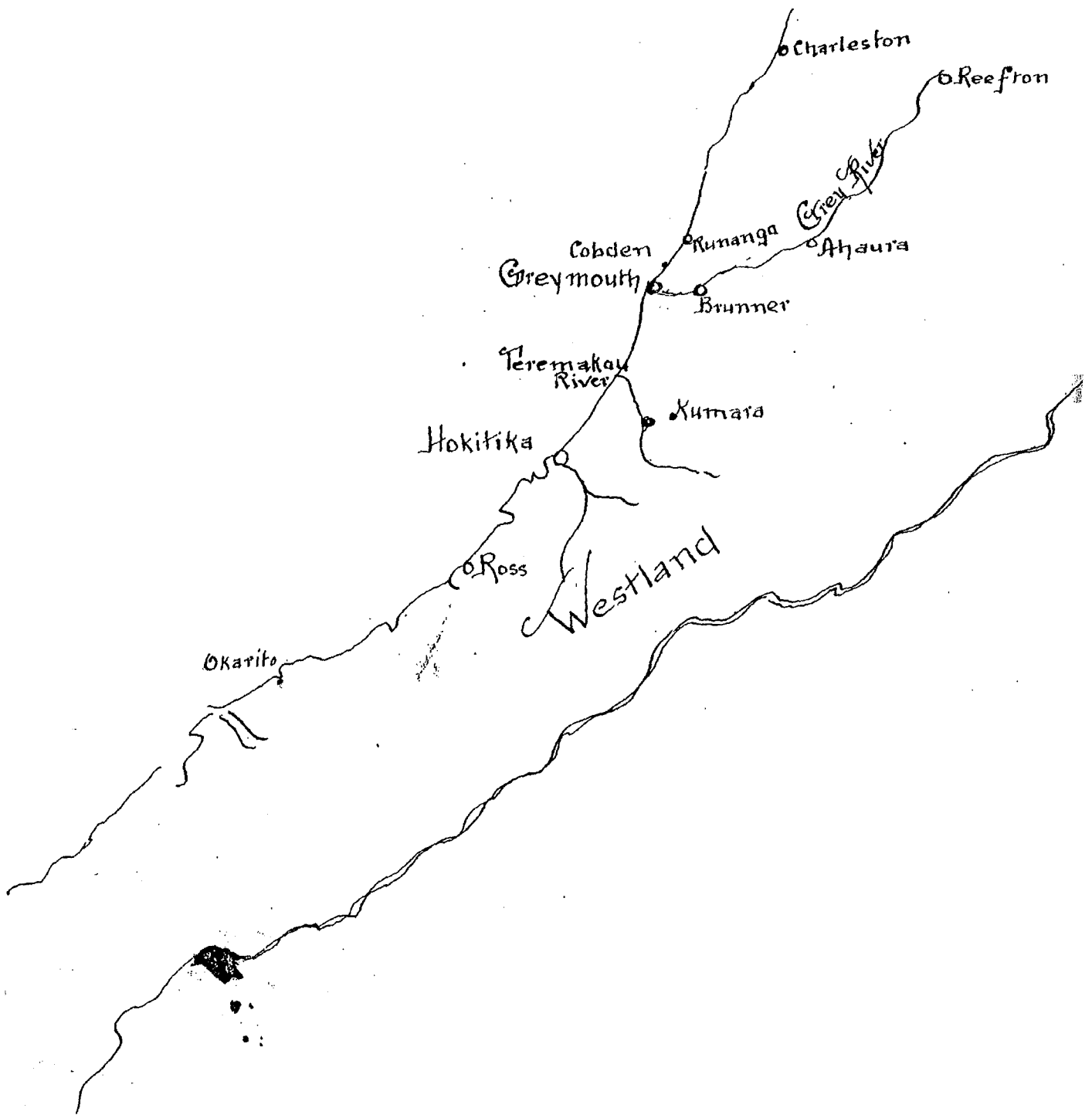
He describes the Southern Island and the West Coast in particular, as "an inhospitable shore, unworthy of observation, except for its ridge of naked and barren rocks covered with snow. "As far as the eye could reach, the prospect was wild, craggy and desolate.

2. Constitutional History of New Zealand. Pages 18 and 19. Hight and Bamford: Christchurch, 1913.
3. Tales of the Golden West. Page 11. Waratah (Hinemarsh) Christchurch, 1906.

So far as we know the first Europeans to arrive in "Te Wahi Pounamu" were Messrs Brunner and Heaphy, surveyors connected with the New Zealand Land Company. After journeying from Nelson during a period of twenty two weeks, they reached the native settlement of Arahura, in 43° South Latitude. Extracts from their diary would be out of place in the present work, since their journey savoured in no way of a missionary voyage.

Suffice it to say, that, when they returned to Nelson, they reported that the country was unfavourable for settlement, and that the rivers were unfavourable for even coasting vessels to enter. We may also remark that Mr. Brunner the discoverer of the coal seam that bears his name, at the conclusion of his notes on the West Coast, made a forcible appeal on behalf of the natives (not quite a hundred souls in all), scattered along the West Coast.

In 1859 an unsuccessful attempt was made to purchase land from the natives of Westland. However in 1860 the Maoris of the West Coast - 110 in all, being the sole survivors of the once numerous native tribes-sold to Queen Victoria 7,500,000 acres of land for the sum of £300., receiving also land reserves to the extent of 10,000 acres chiefly on the site of the present town of Greymouth. Thus did "Te Wahi Pounamu" pass into the hands of the Europeans.



Chapter. V.

WHERE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CAME - WESTLAND.

"Where Westland's mountains heave their heads
 Snow crowned to greet the sun,
 Where Westland's virgin forest spreads
 And Westland's rivers run;
 My home is there beside the brook
 That swiftly curls along
 While many a bower and bosky nook
 Resound with sylvan song." 1.

G. Morris.

Under southern skies in the "far flung" land of the rising sun, New Zealand, between the parallels of 41 and 46° South latitude, is a narrow strip of country called by the Maoris "Te Wahi Pounamu" (the land of the greenstone) but now known by the less romantic name of Westland.

This region of "wet skies" and "soft rains" is overshadowed by the snow crowned Southern Alps which form "the great divide" between the East and West Coasts of the South Island. The waters of the mighty Pacific stretch Westward, while sunny Nelson lies to the North, and cold Otago towards the South.

2
 The Province contains 3,045,700 acres (4,442 sq. miles). Mountain ranges and forest lands occupy 2,843,147 acres, rivers and lakes 29,759 acres, and open country 172,800 acres. The main physiographic features of Westland are the alpine chain, an elevated peneplain, and the coastal plain.

1. "The Westland Minstrel." Hokitika. 1893.

2. "Romance of Westland." Harrup; Christchurch. 1923.

The principal rivers are the Grey, the Teremakau, Arahura, Hokitika, and the Totara - all of which save the Grey (which rises in Lake Christabel) flow from the melting mountain snows and discharge their waters into the Tasman Sea.

"West Coast rains" are proverbial throughout Australasia, and certainly the climate of the West Coast is wet, very often, exceedingly wet. And yet those who have travelled in many lands and who have dwelt in many climes say that the spells of fine weather on the Coast are unsurpassed. After a heavy fall of rain, the sun bursts forth and perhaps for weeks the Coast will enjoy a soft, fresh atmosphere of clear calm weather, without the sudden changes so prevalent on the East Coast, where a "Yank" formerly described the weather as exhibiting so many "samples" each day.

Of course the climate is largely determined by the physical configuration and the character of the prevailing winds which blow from the north west. The average rainfall is about 110 inches while the annual mean temperature is 53.8° . As a result of the heavy rainfall and temperate climate much of the West Coast is virgin bush of an area of approximately a million acres. Tussock and other native grasses account for another quarter of a million acres, while a similar area is barren and unproductive.

The area under cultivation is only about 150,000 acres as the remainder (exclusive of the forest area) is either too broken or too rough for profitable cultivation, while the cost of removing the stumps of the burnt forest is prohibitive under present conditions of labour.

What a wild overgrown country it must have appeared to miner and missionary of '65, with its evergreen hills, rich with mighty trees aflame in the summer time with crimson bloom of rata! Much of the beauty of the woods has disappeared since the advent of the white man, but enough remains to allow us a glimpse of the picture presented to the pioneers "crossing the bar" ~~the bar~~ "in the days of old, the days of gold."

The bush furnished the early settlers with timber valuable for building purposes. As early as 1865, Messrs Findlay & Potts had started sawmilling on Gibson's Quay, in Hokitika.
³
 In 1869 rimu from the West Coast forests was exported to Lyttelton, Dunedin and New Plymouth, and in 1870 to Melbourne.
⁴

The timbers chiefly milled were Rimu and Kahikatea, Miro, Matai, Totara and Silver Pine. The Rimu is still the most extensively used for all purposes throughout New Zealand; most of the dwelling houses on the West Coast are built

3. Red Pine.

4. White Pine.

from this timber, the suitability of which dispensed with the use of the less easily procurable materials of brick and stone. That those who built with rimu "built wisely" has been proved during these days of awful visitation,⁵ when the devastating effects of the earthquake on brick buildings is so plainly visible.

While we see trembling the earth on which we move, we read once again the old records of the Coast to see if our brave pioneers have in their days experienced what we experience in the days that are.

An earthquake shock was recorded on the 19th October 1867, while the great earthquake which passed through New Zealand on September 1st 1888 was felt severely at Greymouth. The shock occurred at 4. a.m. and was sufficiently alarming in its results; many chimneys were thrown and terrified people rushed from their houses to the comparative safety of the streets. Earth tremors and shocks occurred at intervals and consequently when night came, many were afraid to re-enter their dwellings, and so walked the streets till dawn.

June 17th. 1929 has brought Westland if not near the focus, well within the range of the vibrations - nearer than it has ever been since the coming of the pakeha, and the words of Alfred Domett well describe what we have seen and felt during

5. Earthquake. June 17th. 1929.

the last few days.

5

"All-nature wrung with spasm, affrighted reels
Aghast, as if the heavy chariot-wheels
Of God in very truth were thundering by
In too intolerable majesty:-
Then he who for the first time feels the shock,
Unconscious of its source, unguessing whence
Comes flying o'er him, with oppressive sense
Of irresistible omnipotence,
That boundless, strange o'erwhelming influence."
Alfred Domett:

Chapter. VI.

THE MEN TO WHOM THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CAME.PIONEERS OF WESTLAND.

1.

"Treasure I sought over land and sea,
And dearly I bought Prosperity."

Oxenham.

Just as Saint Patrick was sent by Pope Celestine "ad Scotos in Christo credentes", so the Catholic missionaries of Westland came to "Scots" or Gaels believing in Christ. They came to men who were ever anxious to co-operate in the advancement of Christ's kingdom, to men whose worth was not in matter or in money, but in nobility of soul, and to men whose generosity towards all things Christian remained the proudest boast of a faithful people.

Now whence came the Catholic men to Westland? From Ireland, chiefly, first to the sunny shores of Australia, in quest of gold - "yellow, glittering, precious gold", which many a digger there found to be as elusive as the golden fleece famed in story. With hope still beckoning onwards they crossed the Tasman Sea to the cold and cheerless plains of Otago, where again fortune was to smile on some and to laugh on others. One more "golden opportunity" and through Cannibal Gorge and Wilberforce Pass, or round stormy south-west shores, came the men less fortunate but no less brave.

1. "My Treasure". London. 1913.

To the West they came, for underneath the maze of forest, beneath the marshes and the fens, on the shelving sea beaches, in the beds of the rivers, and sparkling in the very courses of the creeks, lay the magnet which was to transform the weird wilderness into a busy haunt of man.

It was 1865. The time was certainly opportune, since the Australian goldfields had given up their virgin tribute, while the Otago goldfields had also passed the flush of their discovery, and the Coast, in welcoming the new comers, entered on one of the great phases of its existence. Great, certainly - for gold lay there - in some places pockets of gold, in others an even quantity of gold mingled with sand or loam.

As the reports of fabulous finds reached the home land, hundreds of immigrants poured in. The total population at the end of 1864 was 800, in April 1865 it had doubled itself, and at the end of the year 1866, it had reached 50,000. Of these some found gold, and so became rich very quickly, some found gold, not at first, but after years of toil, and some there were, who never made their way to fame and fortune, but all could say with their pioneer poet, Thomas Bracken,

2.

"Upon the muster-roll of death, I've heard them call my name:
I go to take possession of a richer, better claim.
Just listen, Harry, listen, don't you hear it over there,
I know it is, I'm sure it is, that long-remembered prayer."

Thomas Bracken.

2. "The Beggar's Prayer." Wellington. 1923.

Chapter. VII.

EARLY CHURCHES IN WESTLAND.

1.

"Be this the chosen sight; the virgin sod,
Moistened from age to age by dewy eve,
Shall disappear - and grateful earth receive
The corner-stone from hands that build to God."
WORDSWORTH.

2.

It is recorded in the history of Australia that in 1793 two Spanish vessels, the Discovery and the Intrepid, entered the harbour of Port Jackson. The crews were on a voyage of discovery and were permitted to erect an observatory on shore. On board was a Spanish Chaplain, who exclaimed on seeing the beautiful residence of the Governor "Our nation would have builded a house to God before building one to man."

Had this chaplain visited the West Coast in 1865 he would have found that men of other nations, too, "thought of building a house to God" before they built magnificent homes for man.

In the first anniversary edition of the West Coast Times, the editor says "On the 3rd. of May in the year of grace one thousand eight hundred and sixty five, the West Coast Times was modestly ushered into existence. Until a few weeks previous to that date, what is now Westland was literally a "terra incognita".

1. "Ecclesiastical Sketches". Gordon & Gotch Wellington.

2. "History of the Church in Australia."

Cardinal Moran. Page.8.

3

Although gold had been discovered towards the end of the year 1864, it was not until the 5th March, 1865, that the Westland goldfields were proclaimed, and a resident warden (Mr. W.C. "evell) appointed at Hokitika. Calico tents and flax whares sheltered many a sturdy digger from the heavy downpours of rain, while more than one contrived a protective covering by placing four posts in the ground, three saplings on the top, the middle one a shade higher than the other two. ^{These they covered with canvas}

In spite of these adverse circumstances the Catholics and Wesleyans had opened churches for public worship. That a church for the Anglican community was not also in existence was not the fault of some of its members. ⁴ Repeatedly they complain, through the medium of the press, of the apathy displayed by the authorities in connection with the erection of a church.

From these records we see that the pioneers of the Coast brought with them the religious zeal of their forefathers, for no sooner was a new discovery made with promised prospects of permanency, than the various Christian bodies set about the building of churches.

In such work priority and pride of place must be conceded to the colonists of Irish Catholic Nationality. In most of the West Coast centres the first churches and schools were those

3. "Banking under Difficulties," Page 131.

4. Foot note,. In the West Coast Times of April 26th, 1866. The following letter is addressed to the Editor,
"Sir, Months ago a proposal was mooted for erecting an Episcopalian Church in Hokitika. So far the matter went and no further. Catholics and Wesleyans are the only two denominations that have had the public spirit to build edifices for Christian worship."

An Episcopalian,

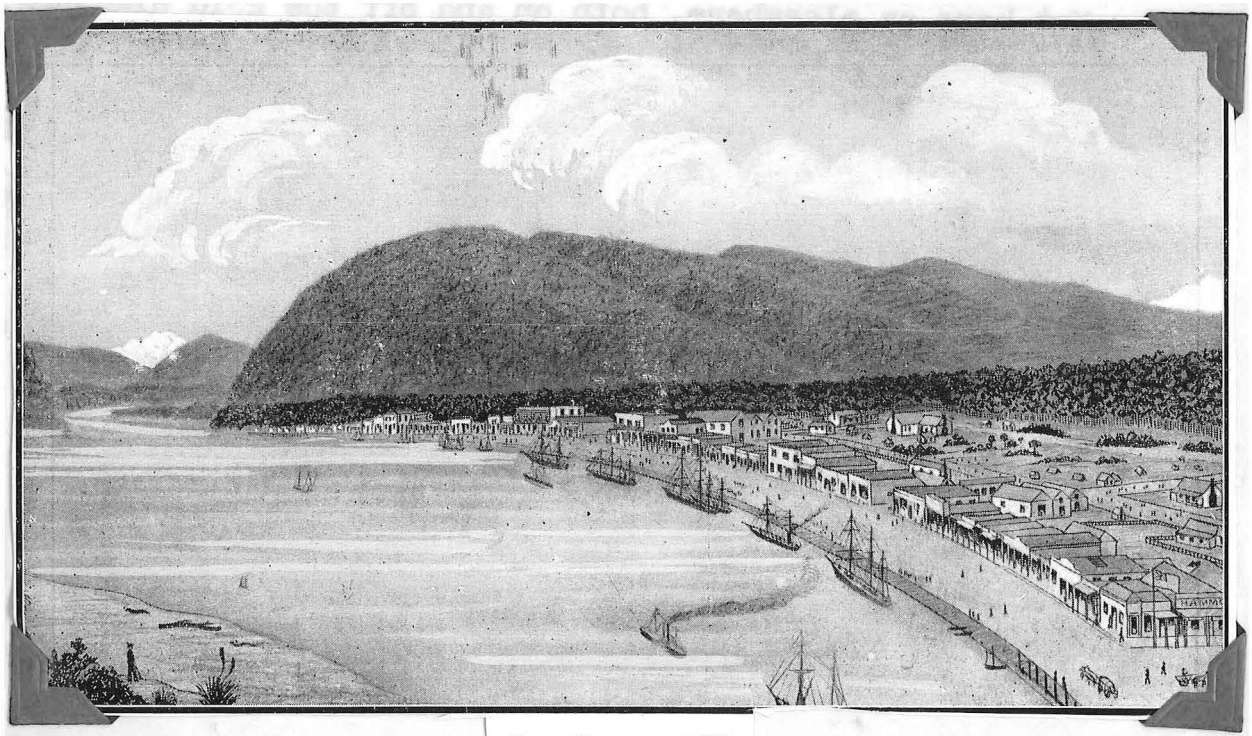
established by the Catholic body, which in those days consisted almost entirely of Irishmen, as may be seen from the names of the church committee members at the various stations. Among a people with such ardent zeal and unbounded generosity, the Catholic Church could, with every hope of success, place her pioneer missionaries.

Yet here as elsewhere, both on and off the gold diggings, human frailty often manifested itself in unbecoming forms, but the waywardness of some proved no obstacle to the success of the many, and the missionaries of the Catholic Church, whose Founder was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel (Matthew. Chap. XV. 24), knew "how to seek and win poor wandering souls from paths of sin".

5

"And man's forgiveness may be true and sweet
But yet he stops to give it. More complete
Is love that lays forgiveness at thy feet,
And pleads with thee to raise it. Only heaven
Means crowned, not vanquished, when it says 'Forgiven!'"
Adelaide Procter:

5. "A Legend of Provence". New York. 1858.



GREY HARBOUR, 1866.

Chapter. VIII.

population,
excepted
West

EARLY DAYS IN GREYMOUTH.

Greymouth, as its name implies, is situated at the mouth of the Grey River. By the Maoris this river was named "Mawhera" which, in their beautiful language, meant "bright running waters".

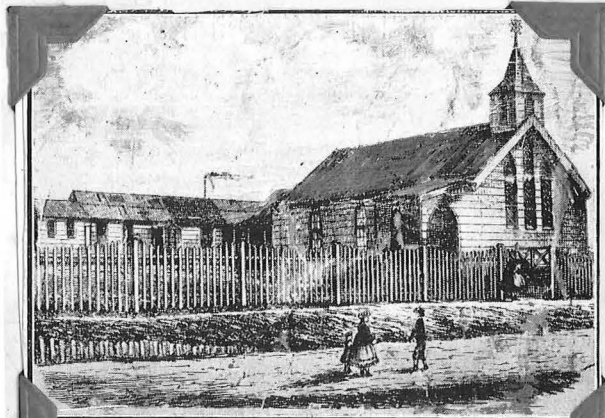
It was Thomas Brunner who gave the settlement the name of Greymouth (in 1846) in honour of Sir George Grey who was then Governor of the infant colony.

A Hokitika pioneer, writing on November 28th. 1865, thus gives his impressions of Greymouth.

"The Grey River issues from the interior through a magnificent break in the range, the hills on each side rising boldly and abruptly from the stream to a height of 5000 feet, and densely wooded from summit to base, the similarity in shape and height existing between them being something remarkable. The town of Greymouth is built upon the south bank of the river and is certainly well situated. At present it consists of a long street parallel to the sea. It is peculiarly a diggers' township, every preparation being made for the reception of gentlemen from the mines, with heavy purses that require lightening. The hotels have imposing fronts, their bars being extensive and well found in all kinds of liquor and most of them



FR. E. ROYER.



FIRST CHURCH AND SCHOOL, GREYMOUTH

profess to board travellers, although the lodging part of the arrangement has apparently not yet been thought of.

I find the Grey community intensely Anti-Hokitikian, the prevailing feeling being that they have not only been neglected but swindled out of their just dues."

Evidently that rivalry - an essential condition to progress - between the queen cities of the west is one of long standing.

¹
The first church to be built and opened for public worship in Greymouth was the Catholic Church. It was opened on the 10th. December 1865, and consecrated by Bishop Viard - Bishop of Wellington diocese (which then included within its boundaries the whole of the South Island). He was assisted by the Reverend Father O'Reilly, a Franciscan Father, and Vicar-General of the diocese. The first priest was Rev. Father Royer,
²
- a French secular priest - who had previously laboured in
¹
Otago. Most of the pioneer priests of New Zealand came from France in response to the many appeals made by Bishop Pampallier to the missionary seminaries in his native land.

The first Catholic marriage recorded in the baptismal register of St. Patrick's Church, Greymouth, is that of Jeremiah Thomas Fitzgerald and Maria McNamara; the ceremony took place at the Dan O'Connell Hotel, as the Church was not

1. West Coast Times, December 1865.

2. "Secular". Technical term of Ecclesiastical law. It is most used to distinguish the clergy who live in the outside world from the clergy who live in the monasteries.



AN INTERESTING VIEW OF EARLY GREYMOUTH FROM COBDEN.

then completed. Very soon after the above date, is recorded the marriage of the parents of the present Bishop of the Christchurch diocese, the Right Reverend Dr. Brodie. ~~The first~~ The first Catholic baptism recorded is that of Thomas Conolly, on the 11th January, 1866. Bessy Martin (now Mrs. O'Hallahan) the first girl born in Greymouth, was ^abaptized on the 24th June 1866.

Early in 1867, Father Hallum, another French secular priest, came to assist Father Royer, and later in the same year came Father Thomas Walsh, native of Kilkenny, Ireland, a secular priest who must for ever remain the chief figure of pioneer Catholic missionary life on the West Coast.

As hundreds of his countrymen were at this time arriving on the beach at Brighton, Charleston and other places, he left Greymouth to minister to their spiritual needs, thus beginning that missionary life, which closed at Westport on December 12th, 1926. His life of toil in other centres will furnish material for another chapter.

GREYMOUTH'S FIRST SCHOOL.

The first school in Greymouth was built by the Catholic body. It was dedicated, like Greymouth's first Church, to Saint Patrick, the great apostle of a missionary race, and opened on Monday February 10th 1866. Its managing committee consisted of Father Emmanuel Royer; Michael Keogh, Vice President; Martin Kennedy, Treasurer; P.M. Griffen, Honorary Secretary; Sheedy, Joyce, Fitzgerald, Quilan, Carroll, Purcell, John Keogh,

O'Donnell and Dr. Smith.

The builders of the church and school laid the foundations of the Catholic Church in Greymouth "broad and deep." They were strong men. It may not be out of place here to remark that when these and sundry others "sailed the seas" free immigration had not yet come into force, each immigrant having to pay at least £40. as passage money. "What an intelligent lot of men they are", was the remark made by almost every educated stranger who came in contact with them.

They were men who had received a solid English education, in fact many of them were classical scholars, men sufficiently educated to appreciate knowledge and "all the good that from it flows", above all, they were industrious men who did not dread the laborious toil which would bring to themselves an honest livelihood, and to their church and school a liberal support.

They had long felt the necessity of having in Greymouth a school where children could receive not only a primary, but also a sound commercial and, if required, a classical education. To accomplish this, they built a wooden school in Arney Street, alongside the Catholic Church, equipped it with the necessary apparatus, and secured the services of Mr. John Phelan, late of Lyndhurst College, Sydney, a gentleman who from his previous experience in the work of tuition in the Australian Colonies, was well fitted to the task.

Children were admitted irrespective of creed or class, while religious instruction was given to Catholic children only.

Want of means to pay school fees proved no obstacle to the admission of poor children. A Catholic pioneer proudly tells how a Presbyterian mother regretted that she could not send her four children to the school, how a kind Catholic neighbour explained her difficulties to the President, and how he paid a special visit to the poor woman to assure her how welcome her four children would be at Saint Patrick's School.

However, parents who were in a position to pay were expected to pay weekly the following school fees - children in the 3rd. class 2/6d., children in the 2nd. class 1/6d., and children in the first class 1/-. The teacher's salary was at first paid from the school fees and from the voluntary contributions of the faithful.

⁴ Westland was at first governed by the Canterbury Provincial Council, and in 1865 it demanded from that body the right of its representation among the members of the Council. "Permission to choose two members to represent the toiling thousands of this goldfield on the Council" was granted. In January, 1866, the number of members from Westland was increased to five, but still, all on the Western slope were gradually realizing that separation from Canterbury would have for them decided advantages. Westland had at this time also one member in the General Assembly of New Zealand, and on this point, too, a struggle ensued. Westland claimed increased representation in Parliament, a right to which it was certainly entitled on the score of population.

3. Mrs. Bourke. Greymouth.

4. "Romance of Westland". A.J. Harrup. Page 128.
Christchurch. 1923.

In order to tide over the difficulty, Mr. Sale was appointed Commissioner of the West Coast Gold Fields by the Canterbury Provincial Council. His position as Commissioner made him the representative of the Provincial Government on the West Coast, and in that capacity all Departments of the Government there were instructed to take instructions from him. With the title of "Commissioner" he performed the various duties of a deputy-superintendent treasurer, magistrate, warden, and a host of other duties. A more capable man could hardly be found and it was Westland's loss when he was forced to leave on important business for England.

The struggle for separation continued, and in 1868, the Westland County Council came into existence, by the County of Westland Bill, which provided for the partition of the County into seven electorates. Education and Charitable Aid, and more especially the establishment of hospitals as well as the all important question of the disposal of the Crown waste lands.

The Council began with a determined effort to discharge its administrative duties, but the financial position of the County proved a serious obstacle to the success of the work. The year of 1873 was thus the last year of Westland's existence as a county. On August 22nd. 1873, The Province of Westland Bill was passed.

During the second session of the Westland Provincial Council in 1874, there was passed the Westland Educational Ordinance, under which the schools were administered till the secular system came into force. An education rate was struck throughout the

Province to support the district schools, supplemented by a Government grant of £3000. for the year.

As all schools at this time either Church schools or schools taught by private teachers, the Catholic Schools received their share of this grant.

In the Westland Gazette (Volume 1. 1868) appears a report on Saint Patrick's School Greymouth, which says "This school's first application for aid is dated the 5th. of October 1866, it was made by the President, Father Royer."

"The branches of education taught in the school are: reading, writing, orthography, grammar, history and geography. The children are not all of Catholic parents, but are, denominationally, about equal. No religious instruction is imparted except twice a week, when the Protestant children are dismissed. The amount of fees actually received average about £3. per week, while the expenditure is £6. per week. The school is situated in Arney Street, the site belonging to the Catholic body in the Grey district. Its dimensions are 50ft. by 20ft, it is well ventilated and lighted. Attendance about 50. Books are supplied.

Our general impression of the school was a most favourable one. The teachers have much skill in teaching. The behaviour of the boys was perfectly respectful and orderly. "

The Westland County Council then made a grant of £100. of which £50 was towards the building fund and £50. towards the teachers salaries.

The teachers at this time were Mr. Joseph Beaupre and Mr.

William Wood, and considering the limited sum granted by the Council towards their upkeep, we can easily believe that the voluntary contributions of the faithful, then as now, were the chief means of support for the teachers of Church Schools.

The men who built and maintained these schools could well say what Amos Lawrence, the great American Philosopher, said when asked for advice "Always act upon a principle of right, and, in doing this, never reckon the cost."

Chapter. IX.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AT HOKITIKA.

1.

Who held the cross before thy parting sight,
 Who watched beside thee, through that dread long night?
 What kind eye wept for thee the last sad tear?
 Sleep well, brave heart, slumber thou Pioneer.

Hine-Te-Fama.

The Maori settlement - Okitika - (th^es was afterwards prefixed) stood on the north side of the Hokitika River. Many say that Hokitika in Maori tongue means "When you get there, turn back again" as the Maoris regard it as the end of the earth, and hold that the souls of the dying flit from this shore.

When the pioneers, Hudson and Price, first gazed on the spot where now stands the town of Hokitika, it was one mass of driftwood so thick that it was impossible to get a horse or wagon through it. The Hokitika River, they found full of snags many of which could not be seen at high water.

We have already seen that this town sprang into existence early in 1865 and was at first a row of canvas tents. On September 1st of that year, the leading Catholic citizens held a meeting at the Australasian Hotel to consider the best means of erecting a Catholic Church at Hokitika and of procuring the services of a resident clergyman. A committee was formed

1. "G^{ave}s of a Pioneer. Occasional Verses. Auckland.

consisting of Mr. Kennedy (in the chair) Messrs: Moran, Fitzsimmons, Myre, Cassidy, Comsikey, Byrne, O'Loughlin, Fitzgerald, Sheahan, French, and McGuire. It was resolved that subscription lists be distributed by the principal storekeepers. A sum of £70. was there and then subscribed by the Committee.

A petition was then sent to Dr. Viard, Bishop of Wellington asking him to send a resident priest to the Catholics of Hokitika. Father John. McGirr was sent as first parish priest. He had in his younger days been chaplain of the 18th. Royal Irish in India and had later laboured among the diggers on the Australian goldfields.

He it was who supervised the building of the church which was opened on the 23rd. December 1865, the second Catholic Church to be opened on the West Coast. Crowds of Catholics assisted at the two Masses celebrated on that day and on Christmas Day in spite of a terrific summer storm, sturdy pioneers of the neighbouring settlements came like the shepherds of old to adore their Infant Saviour in the little wooden church in Tancered Street. Small and mean though the building was, it was something better than Bethlehem's stable and "these toilers of the reef" had not forgotten the faith of their childhood, which taught them to seek their new born King even in abject poverty. Their fervent prayers supplied

"Wassail for the Kingly stranger,
Born and cradled in a manger".

Father McGirr was a member of the Town Improvement Committee, a body which had much to do in a place where still stood the "forest primeval" save for one long narrow street over a mile in length, on either side of which were built corrugated iron sheds, wooden structures which served as hotels and diggers' huts all standing on the sandy beach.

The sound of the bushman's axe, the roll of the ocean wave, the heavy tramp of stalwart men who came to and fro and barked of gold and of sinking, deep and shallow. The prance of pack horses heavily laden, and the rumble of the coaches which ran up and down to the neighbouring diggings, must have made many of those in manhood's prime feel the truth ^p of the poet's words

2
"Bliss was it then to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven."

Forty thousand men worked within a few miles of the town getting gold by handfuls out of the neighbouring gullies, and yet a few well set up mounted police were then sufficient to maintain law and order.

Father McDonough came to assist Father McGirr during the first year as the population was going up by leaps and bounds. Both these pastors made repeated visits to the various settlements south of Hokitika. Pioneers of South Westland at Okarito and Five Mile retained happy memories of Father McGirr's first visit to the South in 1866. Roughing it on the diggings was

2. Wordsworth-On the French Revolution.

hard work even for a young missionary and for Father McGirr who had laboured long in other lands, it was especially hard. Prior to his sailing for the home country in the "Gothenberg" he was farewelled by the citizens of Hokitika. The press hailed the departing priest as a messenger of peace, harmony and good will who had adorned the ministry. In acknowledging the presentation, which took the form of a massive gold watch, Father McGirr said that in all his experience he was not conscious of a single contention with anyone while the Mayor, Mr. Shaw, spoke of their departing priest as a good citizen, a thoroughly kind hearted citizen, respected by all denominations.

Father Joseph Larkin also came to Hokitika in these early days and moved on to Waimea where he built a church. At this time, too, a Catholic Church was built at Kanieri, one of the earliest diggings on the Coast. Another church was built at Stafford by Father McDonough.

The population of Hokitika went on increasing and so did the drowning casualties. From the time the West Coast was rushed the port of Hokitika had gained for itself the unenviable notoriety of being the most dangerous in Southern Seas. Strangers to the Coast were struck with astonishment at the multitude of wrecks and remains of wrecks with which the beach was covered. From the entrance to the river where the "Montezuma" had been cast high and dry on the sands, the picture was one that could not be equalled in any land. In one spot the last remnants of the "Oak" could be observed, further on a confused mass of ruin,

again a heap of splendid planks and ribs to mark the place where the "Sir Francis Drake" and the "Roselle" had finally succumbed to the force of the waves. Another few yards and one could see the masts of the "Titania" and finally what was left of the Steamship "New Zealand" - all were there to remind people of the dangers of the Hokitika bar.

Records of the time show what the missionary endured in his daily rounds, what strength of mind and body were needed by those heralds of the Gospel in a new land; heralds who would say as the Apostle of the Indies, Saint Francis Xavier, said to those who upbraided him for his setting on his missionary voyage. "If merchants go there for gold, cannot I go for souls?"

So if the diggers endured the hardships of the creeks and gullies for glittering gold could not these ambassadors of Christ preach His word and so gain for Him the souls He died to save.

3

"Not sedentary all: there are who roam
To scatter seeds of life on barbarous shores:
Or quit with zealous step their knee - worn floors
To seek the general mart of Christendom;
Whence they, like richly-laden merchants, come
To their beloved cells, -"

3. "Missions and Travels; Ecclesiastical Sketches.
The classical series,. Page 213. Gordon & Gotch
New Zealand.

Chapter X.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AT HOKITIKA. (CONTINUED.)

Father McGirr's successor in Hokitika was Father Martin who belonged to the Society of Mary.

1.

This religious Congregation had its origin in 1816 when a number of newly ordained secular priests of the ecclesiastical seminary of Lyons, France, gathered in our Lady's shrine on the hill of Fourvieres. They consecrated themselves to the foundation of a religious congregation whose members were henceforth to be known as Marists.

Chief among them was Jean Colin who set down the "First Outlines" of a religious rule. For this he had no other book than what the Gospel has left us on the life of the Holy Family at Nazareth and the first mission of the Apostles. Associated with Father Colin in this work was Father Champagnet who founded the congregation of Brothers known as Marist Brothers with whose work we shall deal in a later chapter.

The apostolic labours of the priests of the Society of Mary comprised the work of the missions, the work of teaching in the Universities and Colleges and the work of training young men for the priesthood in the novitiates and scholasticates of the Society and in the Diocesan seminaries.

In 1836 the Holy See entrusted to the Society the vicariate of Western Oceania, and Bishop Pompallier who was not a member of the society but very well acquainted with its work was

1. Marist Year Book. 1st Edition 1927. Wellington.

appointed Vicar Apostolic of the new mission.

On setting out on his mission career he took with him Father Servant, the first Marist Father to arrive in New Zealand. Other zealous missionaries soon followed, including Father Epalle who in 1845 shed his blood for the faith in the Solomon Islands, Fathers Gavin, Pezant, Cherion and several others who preached " Christ Crucified " to the nations of the north.

Father Amatus Martin the first Marist father to labour in Westland was born in France in 1834. For some years after his arrival in New Zealand as a missionary priest he was stationed at Nelson, later in Otago and in 1868 he came to Hokitika where he was destined to remain until called to his reward on the 5th August 1906.

On his arrival he found a Catholic Church and a Catholic School and the stalwart Catholic pioneers who had so generously contributed to the construction of them found in their new pastor, a strong defender of the faith, a good citizen and a friend and father in their hour of affliction. Some of his old friends the miners of Otago who had preceded him westward guided him over the "new rushes" and all acted generously towards the zealous missionary whom they had learned to love and revere. No one was excluded from the all embracing sympathy of the large hearted Dean Martin; those who were oppressed in any way had an equal title to his good offices, irrespective of race or creed.

In the Catholic School his interests were unbounded and it was a well known fact that the most wayward children held the foremost place in his affections. "One of Dean's pets" always meant that such a one was by no means a model pupil.

It often happened that complain^{ts} were made by the teachers against some unruly pupils. The Dean was called upon to investigate the cause of the trouble and if possible to find out the guilty one. On such occasions the fatherly pastor came making vigorous use of his red pocket handkerchief and assuming the most formidable appearance in order to strike terror in the young delinquents. After a most patient hearing he would say "This trouble is like 'Pat's flea, when you go to look for it, it is not to be found." To the offenders he would say "Gwoff" (go off), and the next time you appear before me let it be in a coat of mail". Usually there was no "next time" for all knew the significance of the threat and all knew too, that the Dean could rule with a strong hand when the occasion demanded it.

Before his death he was wont to say in the humility of his heart "I have done nothing great except to build St. Columbkille's Convent and to bring religious teachers to the coast.

It could be said in truth that all his actions were great for in the words of the Apostle all he did, he did "for the greater glory of God".

Chapter. XI.

THE GOLDEN DAYS IN GREYMOUTH.

Early in 1870 Father Royer left Greymouth for Otago. Sorrow filled the hearts of the grateful pioneers when they assembled to bid farewell to their first priest who had ministered so faithfully to them during those first years in Greymouth when missionary and miner knew little of the material comforts which today make life in the "wild west" a little more tolerable.

Father Nicholas Binsfield a native of Luxembourg succeeded Father Royer. He was a Marist Father who had come to New Zealand in 1869, going to New Plymouth where he served for one year as military chaplain, and arrived in Greymouth just before Easter 1870.

It was no easy matter then to reach the goldfields by sea since there was no harbour along the coast. A regular line of steamers took passengers from Melbourne and transhipped them into tenders when the weather was favourable; if not passengers and freight were taken back to Melbourne to be afterwards brought back in the hope of better luck. "I did not meet with such a disappointment" says Father Binsfeld in his memoirs but still his landing was a new experience for him. A heavy surf was on at the time and in descending from the steamer the passengers were put under the deck of the tender the hatches being carefully closed over them. The little craft steamed away,

up and down like a child's kite and presently struck the shingly bottom on the bar through which it ploughed with a vigour that made the boat labour and creak in every joint, while the waves swept over the deck. Still none of the passengers showed any sign of alarm; "it was the way to the goldfields of those days".¹

Greymouth, Father Binsfeld found to be still in a state of primitive formation. There were scarcely any streets; the quay was the only place in the township where houses were joined to each other and here most of the buildings were public houses. Native bush extended as far as "Tidal Creek" (the railway crossing now) while the rough pathways were studded here and there with stumps and logs. Men from almost every country in Europe could be seen and heard among the throng that came to seek for gold.

Catholics formed about one third of the population, and Father Binsfeld was heartily welcomed on arrival, the principal citizens coming to the presbytery to welcome him. "There was a good spirit among them; they were united and assisted well at the services of the Church; it was a pleasure to preach and minister to them".²

People who visited not the Westland of those days cannot form any idea of the incessant hardships the miners and those living inland had to undergo. Dense forest covered the land,

1. "Church in New Zealand": J.J. Wilson. Page 109.
1st Edition. 1910. Dunedin.
2. "Church in New Zealand. Page. 110.

rain and yet more rain fell in all seasons thus turning the tracks into veritable swamps. Communication with the various diggings was carried on by saddle tracks, by following the beaches, by travelling on foot and partly by river boat.

The track from Greymouth to Hokitika was nothing but a sandy beach, bounded on one side by thick scrub, which seemed impenetrable and broken only in those places where creeks or rivers burst forth to mingle their waters with those of the ocean. Travelling on foot along the beach was not pleasant under any circumstances, but when the poor weary digger trod his weary way alone as he was ^{often} forced to do, it was intolerable. There was nothing to be heard save the dull everlasting roar of the surf varied only by the screams of the sea gull.

The congregation at Greymouth was only a small proportion of the souls entrusted to Father Binsfeld's care. His mission enclosed an immense area. It extended south to the River Teremakau, from its source in the Southern Alps to its outlet in the Tasman Sea 40 miles; to the west from the sea to the Razorback a distance of about 26 miles; to the north as far as the Southern Range, bordering the Buller River Valley 50 miles; to the east as far as the Main Midland mountain ranges.

Digging townships were dotted all over this extensive territory. Nor were they in easily accessible situations. Nature had

had stored her glittering treasures far away up towards the head of long, narrow and deep gullies or creeks which formed tributaries of the Grey River.

The West Coast gold fields from the time of their discovery were stamped by a peculiar characteristic viz. the instability of their workings, for the discoveries at first made, being confined to shallow creeks and gullies easily wrought, were soon worked out, consequently the population was ever on the move. And yet

⁴
'Life was a jest in the far-flung West
When the God of Greed cried "Gold!"

4. "Night Riders." by Frank Doogan. GREYMOUTH EVENING STAR.

Chapter. XII.

FATHER BINSFELD VISITS THE "DIGGINGS."

1

"I faced a future all unknown,
 No opening could I see,
 I heard without the night wind moan,
 The ways were dark to me,—
 "I cannot face it all alone,
 O be Thou near to me!"

Oxenham.

About the end of May, 1870, Father Binsfeld started out alone on a first pastoral visit to the various diggings and localities. It was a solitary day's journey into a rugged mountainous wilderness. He rarely met a traveller. He had a capital horse which was quite equal to the task before him. This animal had to carry in front of his master a good sized saddle-bag, which contained vestments, altar stone, and all the other requisites for the celebration of Holy Mass, but he went off cheerily after his liberal breakfast, which was his only meal for the day.

At the entrance to the Grey Gorge the river was crossed in a punt, and then began the travelling experience on the saddle tracks. Here the worthy priest learned a new chapter in the art of riding. Although accustomed in his youth to ordinary horsemanship, he had yet to learn to keep his seat, not because of the animal but of nature itself.

In his diary he gave a vivid description of this

1. "God is Good". Bees in Amber. 1913. London.

memorable visit. The track on which he travelled ran along a mere ledge cut in the mountain side, with the river down below and a steep forest towering above, the passage being so narrow that a false step meant death to the rider and horse. Some miles further, plunging knee-deep in mud, sufficiently sticky to make a fixture of both horse and rider, he eventually came to a place known as Langdown's Crossing. Here the Grey River had to be crossed, not on a punt, but by fording. It was deep and the current was swift. "A man had been drowned here some time previously" he writes "and forsooth, there was plenty of room for drowning, but, thanks to the good guardian angel, the opposite bank was reached in safety. It is surprising what a horse accustomed to this kind of travelling can do."

From Langdown's Crossing the country before him was level until he reached the first diggings at Nelson Creek.

Towards sunset he arrived at "Try Again" where he put up at a store for the night. Everywhere he went he was treated with genuine kindness. "Try Again" was a worked out diggings. A short time previous, hundreds of men had been working there. At Father Hinsfeld's visit all that remained resembled a totally destroyed city - long stretches of tail-racing, hillocks of boulders, huge uprooted trees in every direction.

Deserted, though it was, Father Hinsfeld stayed there for the night as he found near by a large hut which served as a temporary chapel and the diggers came from the neighbouring gullies to assist at mass.

Here we shall pause in the missionary journey to describe a typical diggings. The diggers, stalwart men, dressed in proverbial moleskins, grey flannel shirts and boots of the strongest material, the soles being made of iron, stood in the mud and water all day long, washing away by hydraulic power, high terraces or the faces of mountains, great forest trees and rock-like masses of stone coming down in quick succession. But this was only a preparation to lay open the substratum of the earth, sand and gravel. The whole of this was dug out and thrown into a water race, and thus gold was separated from all alluvial matter. Sometimes the ground would be rich and a man would make from £10. to £14. a week.

2

'We got the gold too easy, or we handn't been so green,
Until too late we never knew its worth;
But that was digger nature, was the digger ever seen;
Who, neath the smile of Fortune, dreamt of dearth?

However the claim was not always a success and when it turned out to be a "duffer" the men who had worked together would dissolve partnership and disperse. The diggers usually worked their claims in companies of four to six men. A correspondent who wrote "Rambles in Westland" for the "West Coast Times" in November 1869 says, "I met crowds of disappointed diggers who have been in search of a 'rush' and have not found one. I go further on, I meet more diggers, some going, some coming back. All are gloomy save one - a son of Erin, who carries

2. "In Later Days" by Con. O'Regan. Greymouth Evening Star.
1894.

a bundle of herbs on his back. He says he has been wasting 'time' but he has a good supply of what he wasted, for he is carrying 'thyme' to make up for what he had lost".

Butchers and storekeepers who had supplied the diggers with meat and provisions, would in hard times share their ill success, that being an understood custom between diggers and suppliers.

The diggers huts were of modest dimensions - 6 feet by 8 feet - and were usually built of wooden slabs with chimney and roof of corrugated iron. Sometimes in an isolated spot could be seen a hut large enough to accommodate from two to six mates, the bunks being placed one over the other so as to resemble those to be found in cabins aboard a ship. Bakers, liquor sellers and others established themselves in the same rough and ready manner, and in a very short time the habitations sprang up like mushrooms, especially if there was a probability of the diggers striking gold. Like mushrooms too, they often disappeared in a night.

3

"What days of cheerful toiling, what wild uproarious nights,
What happy days, what glorious nights were then
Such mirth and merry making such drinking and such fights,
Old mate, such times we'll never see again."

To return to Father Binsfeld whom we left at 'Try Again' conducting evening devotions, consisting of rosary, sermon and night prayers, we shall accompany him on his next journey. On the second day he set out for what was then the centre of the group of mining places,. On the way he called at Callaghan's,

3. "Later Days. Con. O'Regan.

another small diggings upon high terrace land. This part of the journey had to be done on foot, while he made his way through the thick mud and rushing torrents as best he could, but the terrace had to be ascended by crawling on all fours and by pulling himself by the aid of tree roots.

Late in the afternoon he reached his next station. This was an alluvial digging in a dense forest, and in full working order, as was evident from the number of water races met on nearing the place. Next day Mass was well attended although it was a working day; and the good pastor left with a happy heart. He now retraced his steps down the Grey River Valley to No Town. This had been a busy centre for a few years but like 'Try Again' he found it deserted: still the men were in neighbouring gullies, and the following day being Sunday mass was celebrated.

He then moved onward towards a more recently discovered goldfield. A blazed track through a dense and swampy forest marked the way. This meant simply a projected track without any formation, the direction being marked either by a chip cut from the bark of a tree, or by a broken down branch. Such a journey required time and patience, especially when over spongey ground, thickly covered with a dense undergrowth of bush, or along the streams of a creek running between high and narrow banks. The traveller was forced to pay strict attention in this maze of forest and at the same time keep a good look-out for the horse's safe stepping place. In several places it was necessary that he should lie flat on the horse's neck under projecting branches

while gusts of wind carried off his hat, the recovering of which necessitated another delay on the journey.

Towards sunset an opening in the forest revealed the locality of a new El Dorado which was a small canvas township. As soon as Father Binsfeld dismounted and took off the saddle, his horse made for the wilderness. It took more than a week to find him. A packer returning to Greymouth allowed the horseless rider to join him on one of his horses, and thus he reached home after his first memorable visit to the diggings.

The next week he set out again for other fields, thus visiting each centre once a month. Well could an old pioneer⁴ say "We chased the gold and the priest chased us." These were some of the more important stations that Father Binsfeld visited - Greenstone, Marsden, Maori Creek, Maori Gully, No Town, Red Jacks, Nelson Creek, Half - ounce, Hatter's Terrace, Napoleon, Moonlight Creek, Murray's Creek (the present Reefton) Boatmans and Canoe Creek - all populous centres which rang with the laugh of the hardy digger of whom we may say:

⁵
"Disappointments could embolden
And new hopes replace the olden."

4. Mr. Mooney. Greymouth.

5. "If the Heart is Young". by Maurice O'Reilly. London. 1922.

Chapter. XlII.

The LABOURS OF FATHER BINSFELD (CONTD.)

1

"For all men the law of work is plain,
 It gives them food, strength, knowledge, victory, peace;
 It makes joy possible and lessens pain,
 From passion's lawless power it wins release;
 Confirms the heart, and widens reason's reign
 Makes man like God whose work can never cease."

Bishop Spalding.

With so many stations to visit, it is easy to understand that the exertions of one man among such a scattered multitude could not do justice either to himself or to his flock. This view was speedily taken by Father Binsfeld who, preferring the outdoor and more strenuous life, communicated with his superiors and expressed his willingness to take the position of assistant priest if another Father could be found to act as missionary rector. His was to be the 'rough road' in the wild land, the Westland, and he was the kindest of hearts, the true heart in which the diggers held a foremost place.

When changed to 'fresh fields' and 'pastures new' he loved to speak in his reminiscences of the 'fine lot of men, independent, with pride of position and pride of race' among whom he worked on the West Coast.

'What pleasant nights were spent among them when time allowed me - scholars in my hut from whom I heard quotations from Virgil, Horace and Homer longer and more varied than I could recite.'

1. Oc-casional Verses.

In fact the whole range of Society had its representative among the diggers. They were a 'slice of society' from the highest to the lowest, an essential recommended by New Zealand's greatest builder, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, although it was not by any pre-conceived plan that this important feature of his colonisation scheme was carried out in Westland.

These diggers of Westland were kind men, kind to each other in the event of misfortune, kind to the newcomer who, once admitted to their circle, no longer found himself a stranger in a strange land. They were honest men. Their huts would not infrequently be out of sight but nevertheless the doors knew not locks.

Father Binsfeld tells how they used to say: "We know each other, we would not tolerate a suspected man amongst us, and a dishonest stranger simply passing could hardly escape us. At any rate, Father, when you pass by in our absence go in and have a drink of black tea out of the billy (a tin can) which you will always find near the fire".

This the father did on more than one occasion. Once he took more than a drink of black tea, he took gold dust to the value of one hundred pounds from a miner who was just suffering from "high blood pressure". It is just possible that when the fever of his disease had abated, he may have found himself bereft of his money, although he had it in his grasp again, he was not too well pleased with "the rogue of a priest."

Among the diggers no one was more welcome than Father Binsfeld; so much did they appreciate his visits that non-Catholics would vie with members of his own flock in offering gratuitous hospitality to the priest and his horse. In this connection he was once somewhat embarrassed at Moonlight Creek, but the difficulty was solved by the horse going to the Catholic party while the priest took up his abode with the kind hearted Protestant host.

Very often this horse came in for two or three days' holiday. It often happened that a diggings could be more easily reached on foot, in which event the priest would trudge through mud and up mountain sides with his "chapel" of 28lbs. weight strapped to his shoulders.

In July, 1871, he was notified of his appointment to the mission at Waimea and Staffordtown, south of Greymouth, and in the Hokitika district. He was to be replaced by Father Pertuis, another Marist Father and a Frenchman: As we shall see later this mission was for him one of short duration.

Father Binsfeld was the first priest to visit Jackson's Bay, the farthest Catholic station south. It was in 1875 that he accepted the difficult mission of visiting German (born in Luxemburg, German was his native tongue) and Polish colonists who had settled at Jackson's Bay. This was an isolated district and the colonists had few chances of success. The greater number left it and later settled in Canterbury and on the Wairarapa plains. A correspondent writing to the Grey River Argus in

1875, bitterly complains of the apathy shown by the Italians during Father Binsfeld's visit. "The Irish, Poles, and Germans came" he says "but the Italians. They ought to be ashamed of themselves."

A full account of the labours of this priestly priest would fill an extensive volume; but we must now leave him giving a three day's mission at the Inangahua goldfields, named from their inaccessible position, "the penal settlement of the West Coast". The rough life on the West Coast was proving too much for a frame exhausted with hard work, and his superiors thought fit to transfer him under the sunny skies of Nelson, as assistant to Father Yardin.

We ourselves have had the privilege of seeing this man of God, bent with toil and white with age, trying to celebrate Mass and at times supporting himself on the altar table in order to consummate a work which was to him the dearest of all works - the offering of the Sacrifice to the Most High.

2
 "Old priest! on the slope of the summit,
 Did float down and fall on thine ear
 The strong words of weak - hearted Peter.
 "O Lord, it is good to be here!"
 Thy heart was stronger than Peter's,
 And sweeter the tone of thy prayer,
 'Twas Calvary thy young feet were climbing,
 And old - thou art still standing there."

2. "Fifty Years at the Altar". by Abraham Ryan.
 New York. 1896.

Chapter. XIV.

FATHER COLOMB.

"Ye who your Lord's commission bear,

Think not of rest, though dreams be sweet;
Stand up and ply your heavenward feet
Till when the shadows fall
Ye hear your Māter's midnight call."

Keble.¹

In answer to Father Binsfeld's request for a missionary rector, Father Colomb was sent to Greymouth on April 3rd. 1870. He was born in the department of Aisne in the north-east of France. He studied at Belley where he distinguished himself among his co-disciples. He was for seventeen years missionary priest in Romford near London, and on his own request was sent on missionary duty to New Zealand.

On his arrival at the "Grey" he had no experience of what was meant by 'roughing it' on the diggings. At this time hundreds of new arrivals were coming to the Coast.

2
"Men of every creed and race
Gather here before thy face."

And two great evils incidental to all gold-producing districts were not slow to appear - thirst for gold, and thirst for intoxicating drink. The first created the spirit of gambling, the second the spirit of wilful waste which later brought to many a digger, the loneliest of all lone things, an abandoned old age.

1. "The Christian Year".
2. "God Defend New Zealand". Bracken.

3

"We're sadder now and wiser, for times and men have changed."

It often happened that when they had earned sufficient capital to retire and enjoy ease and comfort they would invest all they had in greater mining undertakings. These latter often turned out failures, and then, penniless once more, they had to begin life again.

In a state of intoxication they would often let their pound notes fall on the floor of the hotels. Very often they were picked up and kept by the attendants who justified their action by saying that if they did not do so someone else would.

Against these evils Father Colomb took a firm stand when dealing with his own people. Many feared for the result, but his great knowledge of men coupled with tact and a sympathetic feeling for the failings of others, soon made his path easy.

4

His housekeeper, whom we knew personally, loved to dwell on the charity exercised by this priest. Almost every day his dinner was shared by some 'hard up' digger, often to her displeasure at the time.

Owing to his frequent travelling in thorny paths his coat frequently needed repairing. On the Wednesday morning of the 26th July, 1871, he came as usual to the housekeeper, asking her to mend it for the last time. Next time, I shall ask the tailor," he said jokingly. It was certainly the last time he asked her to

3. "Diggers" Con. O'Regan.

4. Mary. Kennedy.

do it.

When Mary had finished her repairs, he set out on a special visit to Half-Ounce for the purpose of performing the marriage ceremony of Sandy McDonald and Miss Freeman.

About 4. o'clock in the afternoon he arrived at Ahaura. The rivers were rising very fast, and a number of his friends endeavoured to prevail on him to stay all night at the Ahaura. He was specially warned by Warden Whiteford and Mr. A.R. Guinness, but he pleaded urgent engagements at Greymouth, and determined to proceed.

The ford at Nelson Creek was usually one of the best on the road, but in consequence of recent floods, the creek had worked a deep channel for itself close to the southern bank.

It appears that Father Colomb was aware of this, for before he reached the deepest part, he placed himself in a kneeling position on the saddle holding the horse's mane with both hands. This probably cost him his life, for owing to the roughness of the bottom of the creek the horse stumbled, and the rider not having a firm seat, rolled off and disappeared with the current.

Several people witnessed the accident but unfortunately could not render the slightest assistance. The horse made its way to the bank, and was on Saturday brought to town. When the news reached Greymouth, a number of gentlemen set out for Nelson Creek in order to search for the body, as the general belief was that it had not left the creek.

On Sunday it was found on the North Beach, thrown up by the

sea near the foot of the Cobden road. Intelligence was at once conveyed to the Catholic people, a large number of whom proceeded to the spot and conveyed the remains on a dray to the town. As the melancholy procession passed, large numbers representing every class and creed in the community joined with it. The remains were laid in the church in state, before the altar, and until a late hour crowds visited the church to gaze on this martyr of charity.

Never from the foundation of the settlement was there so impressive and heartfelt demonstration as was the funeral procession of Father Colomb. Respect and affection for the departed priest; the peculiarly distressing circumstances of his death; the universal feeling that it would not have occurred had the duty which every government owes to its subjects been fulfilled (here the safe guarding of life by the constructing of roads and bridges); all combined to enlist the sympathy of every member of the community. The funeral was not merely a religious ceremony, and not ^{only} was it an occasion for the exhibition of human sympathies, but it was almost a solemn protest against the criminal neglect of the authorities. He had sacrificed his life in the task of bringing the consolations of his Church to its followers in the outlying districts and by none were the difficulties of that task better known than by the diggers in the Grey Valley.

Here we may remark that at this time the number of deaths from drowning was something appalling. As one of the pioneers whom I have consulted said " A boat load of honest-purposed sturdy adventurers was upset in the effort to cross some treacherous watercourse and in a few moments the beating of their strong

hearts was over and the story of their lives was closed. A horseman was carried away by a rapid stream and, after the lapse of days his body was found washed up on the river banks; sometimes the mutilated remains of a human being were seen brought down by some river flood. Sometimes a mere member was severed by violence from the ~~trunk~~^{limb}, and then again the fleshless and blanched skeleton of some lost adventurer met the horrified gaze of the traveller, telling with mournful eloquence of the way lost, the starvation endured, and of the final laying down to die amid the haunting memories of a distant home."

Daily the newspapers chronicled these sad fatalaties of some brave men, and, daily, some braved the torrents but only to drown as did the men of yesterday. Well did the boy poet of the Coast, Con O'Regan, sing of them;—

5

"A splendid class of men, they were, that filled the country then,
They laughed at Death by ragin' flood, dark forest, craggy glen.
Rough were their ways, an' blunt their speech, they were never
afraid
To say straight out whate'er they meant an' call a spade a spade.

5. "Whisky Brown." Con O'Regan.

Chapter. XV.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE GREY VALLEY.

We have shown in a previous chapter how, when a new "diggings" was discovered on the West Coast and diggers settled there, the first thought of those belonging to the Catholic Faith was to erect a church. Nowhere else on the Coast was this more clearly shown than in the district to the north and east of Greymouth known as the Grey Valley.

A local in the 'Grey River Argus' of August 22nd. 1870, reported that it was the intentions of the inhabitants of Callaghan's Creek, Ahaura, to erect a Roman Catholic Church. The people of the place were displaying an extraordinary amount of public spirit. Not long before, finding that no help could be obtained from the government, they made a track at their own expense. This was to be the second Roman Catholic Church, that for the first of any denomination was the Catholic Church at 'Try Again Terrace', Nelson Creek.

We have seen that the priests of Greymouth made monthly visits to the various settlements, and in 1871 Father Eugene Pertuis came to the Coast. What is now known as the Ahaura was created a parish separate from that of Greymouth and Father Pertuis a Marist Father was appointed the first parish priest. No more interesting clergyman has graced the ministry on the West Coast than has this "little French saint" as he was lovingly called by the people of his day. He laboured at different periods at Ross

1. Ahaura is probably an old Maori Tribal name: Ara-ura, now as Arahura, was the ancient name of the whole of the West Coast from the Buller to Okarito and Ahau-ura was possibly a sectional name.



Rev. Father Pertuis

and also at Greymouth; in both places the pioneers relate some amusing anecdotes of his missionary career.

Numerous Catholic families had settled in the district of Ahaura and very soon after his appointment he set about building a Catholic school to accommodate boarders as well as day scholars.

He was more of a man of God than a man of business and his zeal for "His Father's House" often outran his discretion, as the following incident will show. When the building, a very elaborate one for those days, was half way up, his building fund was at a very low ebb; there was no money to pay the workmen. Consequently everything came to a standstill and the "little saint" knew not what to do. News of his perturbation reached Wellington and the Bishop sent down Father John Goutencire to help him out of the difficulty. The "diggings" was at this time passing through a period of depression. It was out of the question to solicit further subscriptions from the people.

A few of the prominent Catholic men acted as guarantors so that an over-draft was obtained from the bank to tide over the difficulty. On hearing this Father Pertuis rubbed his hands joyfully and exclaimed "Thank God all my worries are at an end." Great was his dismay when Father John coolly replied "They are only just beginning; the overdraft is not a gift, remember."

However he stood in the "midst of those who knew him" and the good people right royally subscribed when times grew better.

On the 8th. April, 1872. St Mary's day and boarding school, the first of its kind on the West Coast, was opened under the direction of Father Pertuis, and the management of experienced and proficient

teachers. It was situated in a healthy position not far from the new Ahaura, and for many years remained the chief educational establishment of the West Coast. At its foundation the goldfields were in the full tide of their success and it was hard for a people intoxicated with plenty to foresee times when;

"The worn survivors scrape for life in gullies here and there,
Their only cheer the memory of the brighter days that were."

Resident boarders were charged seven guineas per quarter (including washing); day boarders ~~three~~ guineas per quarter. In the beginning only girl boarders were catered for, and a matron, Miss Clarke was placed in charge. In 1873 provision was made for boys, and a master Mr. Harron took up duties, Concerts were organised for the purpose of raising money to pay off the debt. At every entertainment Father Pertuis was sure to have his magic lantern; it is easy to imagine how the Ahaura children of this time were held spellbound by the scenes manipulated by the "Village preacher".

The people's pride in their school was shown on the occasion of Bishop Moran's visit in 1873, when they included the following passage in their address;^{1.} - "Though located in a remote part of the diocese, we are proud to say that we have enjoyed the administrations of a Catholic clergy and especially so, that the cause of education has not been overlooked, and we take this opportunity of bearing testimony to the piety and zeal of the reverend gentleman appointed to take charge of the parish, to whom belongs the sole merit of founding educational institution which does credit to the district and reflects honour on the Catholic body."

It may be said of Father Pertuis as of the poet Keats:- "He lived not in the day he breathed" for he had ideas which were far

in advance of his time. His zeal for religion was for ever prompting him to great undertakings and when his boarding school seemed to be in a flourishing condition ('He did not dip into the future') his next project was to obtain religious teachers. At his request came the first Sisters of Mercy to the Coast. In charge was Mother M. Bernard Dixon. She was one of the noble band who had served in the Crimean War as nurses to the sick and wounded and had been associated with Florence Nightingale at Scutari.

To the Coast she came with two other sisters, Sister M. Augustus and Sister M. Camillus, from the Convent of Mercy in Wellington (Mother Bernard belonged to the Convent of Mercy at Auckland) but all three left the Coast after a period of two years. The times and conditions of this scattered parish were hardly ripe for so ambitious a venture, still much good was effected during their brief stay and judging by Inspector's reports, and accounts of various entertain^{tain}ments we may conclude that the children of the district benefitted both spiritually and temporally while under the guidance of the Sisters.

All good things must come to an end and so must Father Pertuis' stay in Ahaura. Go he must "as a man subject to authority" on November 10th 1874, while taking with him "the esteem and respect of every denomination." Arrangements were being made to present him with a valuable memento, and on one of his little flock, proud to be the bearer of such important news, let him into the secret. He would have none of it; poor he came, poor he must go, and it was only after much persuasion that he accepted a writing desk from the school children.

Francis Thompson tells us "to seek him in the nurseries of Heaven" and I think that it is there too, that Father Pertuis will be found. He loved children, and his last evening in Ahaura was spent at a "high tea" which the children gave in his honour. The

report of this entertainment tells us "the tea was served in a style commensurate with the resources of the establishment, and the children grieved at the thought of separation from their dear, kind father, who had laboured so unceasingly for their benefit."

"Had I remained longer I would have opened an orphanage," he said, and he meant this, for every year, on certain "big days" he went round the neighbouring districts to collect the "waifs" to full dishes within the school grounds. Unlike the man mentioned in the Gospel, "who gave the great supper and invited many," Father Pertuis had guests who made no excuses, but came with joy and gladness. In later days this "Founder" shall edify and amuse us at centres farther south.

His successor in Ahaura was Father Rolland, a hero of the Maori War. He was not a stranger to the Coast, for he had made an extensive collecting tour of it some years previously. At that time he was engaged in establishing an educational institute in the form of a boarding school for boys in Taranaki. Probably his superiors, in sending him to Ahaura, had in mind the welfare of the boarding school there; if so he did not disappoint them in their trust.

He reestablished the 'boys' boarding school on a firm basis, gave the pupils every opportunity of acquiring a thorough English and classical education, as may be seen from the press of those days. He secured the services of able teachers, among whom was Mr. Morgan O'Brien, who later taught the Catholic school at Greymouth and who lives still hale and hearty in Palmerston North.

On the occasion of one of Archbishop Redwood's visits to Ahaura (November 1888) four addresses were read, one was from Father Rolland, the resident parish priest, another from the Catholics of the district, and two from the school children - one in Latin the

other in French. To the first two his Lordship replied remarking that if he were to be addressed in so many languages everywhere he would find it necessary to carry with him a polyglot dictionary. Only one was missing - the grand old Irish language, and even that was represented by the inscription over the door offering him "caad mile failte."

x

He then addressed the children in Latin and French, expressing pleasure to find them so well versed in those languages and exhorting them to be always faithful to their holy religion and attentive to their studies. In the evening a concert and dramatic entertainment was given by the children. The proceedings were opened by an overture from the school band. The comedy "no song, no supper" was then rendered and gave rise to much amusement. After a short interval the last act of "Polyeucte" was given in French.

Several of the pupils of the Ahaura boarding school have distinguished themselves. Among them are many well known to us. Father Hugh McDonnell now of Highden, Mr. Edward Sheedy, Christchurch and several other prominent citizens.

St. Patrick's College, now one of the chief secondary schools of the Dominion was opened at Wellington June 1st. 1885, and being more central and more suited, in every way, occasioned the closing of the Ahaura boarding school in Potham's Paddock, where wild pigeons had called to many a restless youth to forsake the desk and follow "the voice of open spaces."

MINOR SETTLEMENTS IN THE GREY VALLEY.

IN the early seventies churches were built by the Catholics at

x. While Archbishop Redwood was a boy in the Seminary at Lyons, he won first prize in French Rhetoric in 1860, and first prize in French narrative in 1859. His first teacher in New Zealand was Father Garin a distinguished French Scholar.

Maori Creek, No Town, Marsden and Maori Gully. At the last mentioned place the church is still standing - a deserted building. All these, as well as the centres already mentioned in Father Binsfeld's territories, were included in the Ahaura parish, and in all these buildings many a good old pioneer bent in fervent prayer "to thank His God for all the goods He gave."

We have seen that Nelson Creek was the first place in the Grey Valley to erect a church. Here there was also a Catholic school concerning which no records are obtainable except the report of January 1881. Some of the pioneers tell me that it was there many years previous to this date. The report of the Government Inspector stated that the building though comparatively small, was comfortable, well ventilated, kept very neat and clean and supplied with all requisites. The number of children in regular attendance was 24, of whom two were absent, the ages ranging from 4 to 11 years. The teacher Mr. O'Reilly, seemed to be in every way qualified for the important position, and judging from the advancement made by the pupils during his time as master, was deserving of very great credit.

Each year at the conclusion of the examination came the children's sports. These were held in Claughesey's paddock. Present day organizers of athletic sports may derive some benefit from knowing how the men of Nelson Creek catered for the "rising generation" in 1881. A programme was drawn up by a committee, so planned that each child should be sure of at least a shilling by way of a prize. Wrestling was not permitted lest "some accident should arise from such tussling." A profuse supply of cakes, fruit and sandwiches was provided on the ground. The ladies were out in full force; their beautiful dresses

being the theme of admiration or criticism as they sauntered along. The committee expressed the wish that perhaps some future member would add to the list of amusements, "those of croquet, lawn tennis, or other suitable matter(!) suitable for the gentle sex".

These details are given because the school was in those early days a centre of much of the social life of the pioneer settlers.

"With its seedy desks and benches, where at least I left a name
Carved in agricultural letters - 'twas my only bid for fame;
And the spider-haunted ceilings, and the rafters, firmly set,
Lined with darts of nibs and paper (doubtless sticking in there
yet),
And the greasy slates and blackboards where I oft was proved a
fool,
And a blur upon the scutcheon of the old bush school".

"The Old Bush School", by John O'Brien.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AT ROSA.

"This is the law of the Yukon, and ever she makes it plain;
Send not your foolish and feeble; send me your strong and your sane.
Strong for the red rage of battle; sane for I harry them sore;
Send me men girt for the combat, men who are girt to the core;"

1.

Robert W. Service.

That was 'the law of the Yukon' could well have been the law of 'the Totara, as the Ross "diggings" was first named. In order to give some idea of the difficulties encountered by miner and missionary, I shall in the next paragraph draw upon an article in the "West Coast Times", 1865.

The best route to this lately discovered gold fields was along the sea-beach to the Totara, on arriving at which - 12 miles from Hokitika, it was necessary to cross in the boat, and after proceeding two miles along the banks of the river (Totara, parallel with the sea-beach, to where the river diverges into the forest, another crossing must be made in a boat 300 yards up the river. The Totara was at that time blocked up at its entrance to the sea. This caused it to assume more the appearance of a lake than that of a river. At the latter crossing the very modest fare of 2/6 was asked - a fee which was out of all proportion to the services rendered. On leaving the boat and following up the bed of the Totara to its junction with Donnelly's "Songs of a Sourdough" - London 1916.

Creek, the traveller followed up the latter for $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles towards the range which opened out before him. A path to the right, up a steep pinch of blue slate brought him to a track cut by Mr. Magee. After travelling $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles up this track he found the 'new rush', Jones' Creek, as it was called by some of the residents, since Mr. Jones was the first to apply for a claim, which however was not given to him.

Evidently some of the residents believed in giving "honour to whom honour is due", and, if not fortune, then fame.

The men who were dauntless enough to follow this route and "to dig for gold", the Totara gilded with its treasure, some of which these men gave freely towards the erection of a Catholic Church, which was opened in May, 1866, by Bishop Viard, assisted by Fathers O'Reilly and Mc.Girr and by Father Golden, who built the church. The last mentioned was the first priest to minister to the people of Totara. He was a secular priest and brother ^{of} the famous pioneer missionary of the Waikato district. The church built over a shaft was a very modest one, and in 1869 preparations were made for enlarging it. Father John Goutenoire was appointed first parish priest in 1868.

3. Totara undoubtedly takes its name from the beautiful totara tree, which in the early days grew in abundance on the West Coast. Totara, noble son of Tane, strong and tall was so valued by the old time Maoris of both Islands that special trees became heirlooms, and disputes for their possession often led to bloodshed. War canoes seventy feet long were sometimes made from a single Totara log.

The "West Coast Times" of October 24th., 1869,
 describes the opening of Saint Patrick's Chapel, Ross,
 as being a ceremony worthy of the opening of a cathedral.
 High Mass was offered, and the Choir, assisted by the Glee
 Club, rendered the "services and responses, of Mozart's
 twelfth Mass in a most reverential and artistic manner "Mr.
 B.Homborg presided at the harmonium.

Owing to the influx of diggers consequent on the dis-
 covery of new claims, the old church could no longer
 accommodate the congregation. The building, by the addition
 made, was in the form of a cross; in depth it measured sixty
 feet by forty feet, while it had thirteen windows". The
 contract had been carried out by Messrs Lockington and Brown
 in a very satisfactory manner.

A pioneer, who lives in Ross, when speaking of the early
 days, says "The new church could not have been long opened
 when I arrived in Ross in 1890, as another boy (now Brother
 Lucius Markham) and I were the first altar boys of Father
 Goutenoire. We were two proud and happy boys on the morning
 of our first appearance on the altar. Donning our soutanes
 and surplices we nervously answered the responses of the
 introductory psalm. When the priest intoned 'Introibo ad
 Altare Dei' I could just gasp out 'Ad Deum qui laetificat
 juventutem meam', I was so excited, and poor Lucius said
 nothing at all. However, we got through the ordeal all right,

and received many congratulations from the priest and people when we left the church. The new church was built with funds subscribed by Catholics and Protestants alike in a most generous manner, as was the free and happy custom amongst the noble and manly diggers in the early days of the Coast.

When Saint Patrick's Day came round every claim lay idle and the miners would throng into the township to join in the processions, attend the concerts and other festivities. In fact it was the national holiday of the West Coast, a day in which people of all creeds and of all nations joined to honour Saint Patrick and to show respect to their Irish pioneer mates. Father Goutenoire was a very fluent speaker with a strong French accent and he was loved by every one. On Saint Patrick's Day he preached a sermon exhorting his listeners to conduct themselves so as to honour the noble race from which they sprang.

He had a "way with him" and always managed to have a crowd at Holy Communion on Sunday morning. He had a most extraordinary memory. If stray members did not attend to their Easter duty, he would round them up, like the Good Shepherd mentioned in the Gospel. He would go the claims of the "back-sliders" just about "knock-off time" and shake hands all round. Then he would tell some comical 'yarn' that set them all laughing. Before leaving, he would remark "Pat Curtain and you Martin Slattery have not been to your Easter duty yet."

Be sure to come to Confession to-night at 8". When Father had disappeared Pat would say to Martin " That beats all . How did he know? We will go please God". When Father John preached his farewell sermon, there was not a dry eye in the church.

His successor in Ross was Father Chareyere, to use the words of the pioneer "a fine, tall, good-looking Frenchman, who spoke good English, preached fine sermons, and was always on the move".

It was he who opened the first school, which was taught by Miss Lonergan. The classes were at first held in the church. After eighteen months Miss Lonergan "fell badly in love with Mr. Jack Hayes, got married to him, and went to live down South." Successive teachers were Mr. Davoren, Mrs. O'Donoghue, Mr. Mulhern and Mr. Crottie.

The next priest was Father Pat. Mc Guinness whom our worthy pioneer met as "he hopped off the coach". He looked around a bit bewildered, but not for long, for I went over to him and asked if there was anything I could do for him. He asked me to show him the presbytery, and in the course of conversation I found out that he hailed from Manor Hamilton, County Leitrim, Ireland, the very town where my father was born and reared. He knew my grandfather and my grandmother, and the meeting between the two exiles, Father Pat and my father, is better imagined than described. He soon set things humming, he re-established the choir, and the

school. He was a short-built, delicate man, but what he lacked in physique he made up in energy".

Father Mc.Guinness was an eloquent preacher and an enthusiastic musician. Often on some summer's eve he could be heard walking up and down singing the melodies of his national poet, Thomas Moore. An appreciative audience of young people sat on the verandah of the presbytery and loudly applauded every song. On Sundays he sang High Mass with all the ceremonies appropriate to a grand cathedral.

But the Archbishop came, and Alas! His Grace discovered what "a light the Ross people had under their bushel." He promptly promoted him to Wellington. "We gave him a send off, with all our blessings and a bag of sovereigns".

In 1878 Ross was included with the many smaller settlements, Greenstone, Kumara, Waimea, Stafford and South Westland, down to the Otago Boundary in one large and scattered parish under the charge of Father Michael Mc.Caughey, a native of County Tyrene, Ireland.

We must not forget to state that Father Eugene Pertius laboured for six months in Ross at the beginning of his missionary career on the Coast. Later we shall glance at his work there in his capacity of parish priest.

CHAPTER XVII.

"OTHER FIELDS"

Gold! Where it is! There it is!

Goldsborough and other minor settlements.

No name on the West Coast betokens the presence of the yellow metal more plainly than that of Goldsborough.

The district of Waimea shared largely in the rich gold findings of the late sixties and early seventies. As it was nearer to Hokitika than it was to Greymouth, Father Mc.Girr, Hokitika's first parish priest, several times celebrated Mass in a large calico structure used as a court-house.

In 1867, Father Larkin, the first resident priest, built a church which he dedicated to Saint Michael. Father Chareyre succeeded Father Larkin, effected great improvements and left it a very pretty church. Father Belliard was the next priest who came to labour and die in Waimea.

With the growing importance of Kumara, the last of the "lucky fields" the diggings at Goldsborough declined and the priest transferred his residence to the more populous district.

GREENSTONE.

This settlement was so named on account of the deposits of greenstone (pounamu) there, out of which the Maoris made meres and axes and other implements of war, ear pendants, and

and the little grotesque representations of "Tiki", the Maori Adam.

The opening and consecration of the Catholic Church in this district took place on the 11th., November 1874, and "formed a very interesting event". It was a neat and substantial structure picturesquely situated on the hill at the entrance to the new township and reflected credit upon the liberality of the congregation, and the industry of the pastor and the committee of which last Mr. Keenan was Chairman. The builder was Mr. J.H. King.

At the ceremony of opening the officiating clergymen were Fathers Ecuyer, Martin, Mc.Guinness and Chareyre - the latter being the local pastor. After High Mass and Benediction, Father Ecuyer preached an eloquent sermon and the congregation testified their interest in the work by a liberal subscription which went far towards freeing the committee from any liabilities.

CHAPTER XVII. continued.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AT RNEFTON.

The Wisdom infinitely wise,
That gives to human destinies
Their fore-ordained necessity;
Has made no law, more fixed below,
Than the alternate ebb and flow
Of fortune and adversity.

Tales of the Golden West.

To this settlement "Waratah" gives the names Quartzopolis

and city City of Mist, but to the very early diggers it was known as Murray's Creek. It sprang into existence about 1870, as the result of the discovery of gold quartz.

In the "Grey River Argus" during 1870 and on to 1874, frequent mention is made of the visits of Greymouth priests to Murray's Creek. Fathers Binsfield, Colomb and of course Father Pertius all visited the diggings and celebrated Mass at the residences of some of the Catholic families.

The diggers at Reefton gave Father Pertius a great send-off when he went to pay his farewell visit. Irishmen formed a great part of the population and petitioned for a resident priest. In 1874, it was created a separate parish from that of Greymouth and Father Michael Cummins, a native of County Wexford was appointed the first parish priest there.

Bishop Moran included Reefton in his famous "West Coast Ride" and right royally did the diggers welcome him. An extract from the address read on this occasion shows how true these pioneers were to the principles of their faith.

"The dark chain of silence has hung over this western coast for many years and those amongst us who are parents, seeing our children rapidly developing into young men and women, without the strengthening sacrament of Confirmation, felt our hearts grow sick with hope deferred".

Surely these men deserved a church and all the consolations of holy religion. A writer in the "Inangahua Times"



Rev. Dean Carew

of June 1876 says that Father Cummins was a man of very engaging personality, a scholar who was both forcible and eloquent, and possessed of the kindest and most generous nature. Confidence, courage, and devotion, characterized his work in the parish of Reefton. His health broke down and he was obliged to abandon his missionary labours. He built the first Church at Reefton and also the first Catholic School which he placed in charge of lay teachers. He also built a church at Lyell in 1875.

Father Denis Carew (of Greymouth fame in later days) succeeded Father Cummins in 1876, and later Father Rolland, who laboured there for twelve years.

When the diocese of Canterbury was formed in 1888, Reefton remained in the arch-diocese of Wellington and as it is in the province of Nelson, its further history does not come within the scope of this work.

Chapter XVIII.

HISTORIC KUMARA.

"There's gold, and it's haunting and haunting;
It's luring me on as of old;
Yet it is'nt the gold that I'm wanting,
So much as just finding the gold"

I. "The Spell of the Yukon"

2. "Waratan" in his "Tales of the Golden West" says Kumara has a "past" and would have been "nowhere" but for an accidental discovery of the precious metal on the South bank of the beautiful but treacherous Teremakau River. On one of its flats, says report, a party of non-prohibitionists, seeking in the wilds of its charming bush scenery for a quiet, out-of-the-way place to start a whisky still, found what they wanted, not far from the present site of Dillmanstown, put up their tents and started preliminary work for the illicit manufacture of "chain lightning". But in digging out the foundations for their tubs, they struck rich gold. Finding it could be got in payable quantities, the whisky venture, promising though it had been, they abandoned and the "out-laws" turned diggers, but they did not rush to inform the Authorities of their treasure trove.

A prospector from the Waimea, no doubt equipped with the necessary "tucker" (provisions) from Seddon's store at Stafford Town lost himself in the bush, and making his way North came unexpectedly on the whisky party "washing up" at the river. He hastened to Stafford Town and reported to Seddon; the two entered into partnership on the spot, and pegged out the new diggings.

1. "Songs of a Surdough"

2. "Tales of the Golden West" 1906 - Page 93, Christensen
By "Waratan" (Mr. Hinemaru)

Before long the news spread and a "rush" set in. The silent forest of majestic trees and tangle of undergrowth was replaced by a mining township. ^{2.} Seddon, being camped on the spot, took a leading part in the laying out of the town. The founders took Melbourne with its wide streets and squares as a model for the new town. In such a place, and in such surroundings was born the Liberal Party, which now guides the destiny of New Zealand.

So much for the political history of Kumara ("Big sweet potato") in the Maori tongue) with which we are but slightly concerned.

Archbishop Redwood says, in his "Reminiscences" that the men of Kumara have never been surpassed in New Zealand in the matter of faith and of liberality.

When Father Belliard, pastor of Waimea, died in January 1877, Archbishop Redwood, who was then visiting Nelson, hearing of the death of his friend, lost no time in coming to the Waimea to conduct the funeral service. Steps were then taken by the resident Catholics to invite him to Kumara. Accordingly an influential deputation was chosen to wait upon his Lordship to tell him of their plans concerning a new Church, and to request him to return to open it. On hearing these good people, his Lordship expressed doubts, alluding to the fleeting nature of the population on goldfields. However, he consented to come to Kumara, not in his episcopal capacity, but as a visitor, and he also consented to deliver a lecture in aid of the funds of the proposed church.

"What was Kumara when I first saw it?"

2. Later the Right Honourable R.J. Seddon Prime Minister of New Zealand.

says the Archbishop. "The locality of as fine a portion of New Zealand forest as could be found. I arrived by Coach at the top of a hill called Sandy's Hill, because an Irish piper, an artist in his own way, used to play for the pleasure of the passengers, as they took some refreshments. From this hill was seen an admirable picture of the plateau beneath, which was a sea of splendid native verdure of every tint imaginable".

Between 400 and 500 people welcomed the Archbishop; an arch was erected over which was painted the cross and mitre, bearing underneath the well known inscription "O crux ave vero spes mea". Mr. Dennis Hannan, on behalf of the people, welcomed His Grace and informed him of their spiritual needs. The Archbishop then lectured on "A week in Rome"; the proceeds of this lecture realised £60, subscriptions £300, thus making there and then a total of £396-17- 0.

THE OPENING OF KUMARA CHURCH.

True to their promise the Church was built by the men of Kumara, and was ready for public worship on the 17th. March 1877, not quite two months from the time they pledged their troth. Well did they deserve their mead of praise from the Archbishop. The usual public demonstrations and the addresses familiar on such occasions characterized the proceedings.

No words could express the delight of Archbishop Redwood on that day. "And now what shall I say to you, who have raised in so short a time this monument to the service of God?" he said at the opening sermon. "When I said that I would be here on Saint Patrick's day - a day very dear to me, because I was on that day consecrated a bishop, I said so as a sort of challenge to you. I said to myself 'If they have the church

built by that time, it will be a sort of prodigy, it will show what they can do.' I have to tender you my sincere thanks and I hope Almighty God will bless you in proportion to what you have done in his honour" Such were the encouraging words from the Archbishop, who having watched the ebb and flow of the West Coast towns, still reigns as The Venerable Metropolitan of New Zealand and the oldest Bishop in the world.

Father McCaughey was the first resident pastor and among such enthusiastic people we can well imagine that in spite of his scattered district, he must have spent many a happy hour. No centre on the Coast excelled Kumara in the mirth and joviality of its people. They believed in serving God with joyful hearts, and from the amusing anecdotes told by some of its old residents, we know that the eccentricities of some produced many comical situations. One example will suffice. It is the occasion of the marriage, in 1878, of a well-known coach driver, and this is how it was reported in the local paper, "The Kumara Times".

"That well-known and highly popular little Jehu, Tommy Maher is now running a double harness. Yesterday morning he found a mate and was cleverly hitched up by the Reverend Father McCaughey. Those who were present at the interesting ceremony say that Tommy stood perfectly quiet and that when the traces were fairly on, the two went at an easy hand-gallop evidently on the best of terms. Both are well known to the public, as being sound in limb and wind, good stayers and without the slightest approach to vice. Their numerous friends will wish them a comfortable journey through life, and a good paddock in which to graze when their

coaching days are over"

In April 1877 Father McCaughey opened the first Catholic School in Kumara. Mr. J.J. Crofts was the Master. Mrs. Dawson acted as a short time as his assistant until the arrival of Mr. P. Duggan, one of the most intellectual of Coast pioneer teachers.

Mr. Duggan, Mr. Crottie, another pioneer teacher on the Coast and Maurice Healy, famous King's Counsel and parliamentarian were classmates in the senior classes of the Christian Brothers' School at Lismore, Ireland, in 1869. When Bishop Croke, then of Auckland, visited Ireland in 1874, he asked for volunteers who would teach for him in New Zealand. Mr. Duggan was chosen by the Superior from those offering, and left for New Zealand in 1874. Mr. Crottie followed early in 1878.

When Mr. Duggan took charge of the Catholic School at Kumara, the roll number was 115. At the beginning of 1878 he was assisted by Miss McDonnell and by Charley McKeegan as pupil teachers. It was in 1884 that Father McCaughey, who had done so much for the district, was moved from Kumara. Father Devoy succeeded him. The school was also his first concern, and on his visits to Christchurch he never failed to bring back something that added to its equipment. He established a fife and drum band, the first band in a primary school in the Colony (as far as we know). The roll number went up to 200, and under the encouraging influence of the pastor, the school reached high water mark.

CATHOLIC CHURCH - SCHOOL AT GREYMOUTH

'IN THE SEVENTIES'

After Father Colomb's death, Father Binsfield returned to Greymouth for a short time. Soon another Marist Father, Father Belliard, came to labour in the parish. He too, hailed from the great missionary land, the land of France, a land through which Christianity spread so rapidly that for centuries she was styled "The eldest daughter of the Church".

Father Belliard was a man of exceptional ability, and had been a professor of "belles lettres" before entering holy orders. In 1865 he came to Invercargill, where a Greymouth resident of today remembers him for his zeal in instructing children in the principles of the faith.

He remained in Greymouth for two years, during which the same zeal characterized all his duties. Later he was appointed parish priest of Waimea, but, his health failing, he had to retire to Hokitika, where he died on December 29th. 1876. His body was placed in a leaden coffin, with the usual outer coffin, and deposited in a tomb built of brick and cement, arched over with solid masonry. The tomb was under the floor and in front of the altar of the church, where he so often with anointed hands, offered his morning Sacrifice.

In later years owing to the change of the river course, the little church was likely to be swamped, and permission was obtained in 1921 from the civil authorities to disinter the body, which, owing to the precautions taken by his dear people in burying him, was found to be almost intact. Many of the old residents of the town were proud of the fact of walking in

the two funeral processions of this worthy priest. The remains were conveyed to the Greymouth Cemetery, and laid in a grave beside that of his friend and countryman, Father Colomb.

Bishop Viard died in 1872. At the request of I. Propoganda, Bishop Moran of Dunedin made an episcopal visitation of the diocese of Wellington in 1873. His visit to the West Coast in February 1873 for the purpose of administering Confirmation was one of the most important milestones in the life of many a worthy pioneer. Nothing in the history of the Coast could equal the reception given by the men of the West to this church dignitary. At every settlement on the Coast processions were formed, addresses read, and visitations of schools made. A holiday was proclaimed all over the Coast diggings, while the Notown Catholics introduced a new feature in clerical receptions - their address was accompanied by a purse of sovereigns. The Bishop was driven in a buggy from one settlement to the next while forty gentlemen on horseback escorted him.

The most picturesque feature of this triumphal march was the reception given him at the Arnold settlement, where some fifty miners, carrying green boughs, met him at a considerable distance from the township, at the entrance of which was erected "The arch of triumph" The good Bishop expressed his pleasure at finding faith so strong in fields remote.

I. Propoganda is a department within the Hierarchy of the Catholic Church, which has under its jurisdiction all those regions in which the missionary state still exists.

Father Joseph Ecuyer, another French Marist Father, replaced Father Belliard in Greymouth. He came in 1874 when the Catholic Congregation was busily engaged in raising funds for the erection of a new St. Patrick's Schoolroom. In 1875 a new site was obtained in Alexander Street, and a new wooden building erected. The new school was of much larger dimensions than the first one in Arney Street. To mark the opening a concert was given by the pupils, one of whom composed and read the following prologue:-

"Good evening friends! with joy I trace
a smile upon each welcome face.

Knowledge is power, old Bacon says,
But in those unpoetic days,
The knowledge 'how the wind to raise'
Is that which claims our chiefest praise.
To raise 'that wind' you're here tonight -
To help a cause that's true and right,
And may you feel, with one accord,
That virtue is her own reward."

The head teacher at this time was Mr. Claude Ahearne, late of St. Patrick's College, Melbourne, where he had a most successful teaching career. That he was to be equally successful in his new field was soon shown, as the first two pupils (William Aiken and Albert Cameron) whom he sent up for the Civil Service examination, passed well. He taught the boys, while a Miss Clarke and a Miss O'Meara taught the girls.

Against those provisions of the Education Act of 1877, which took all aid from denominational schools, (Westland Provincial Council was abolished in 1876) vigorous protests were made, not only by the Committee of St. Patrick's school, but by the Committees of several Catholic Schools in the outlying districts - Nelson Creek, Marsden and Maori Creek, but their protests were in vain.

Since then, the Catholic Schools of the West Coast, as in other parts of New Zealand, have been supported wholly by the voluntary contributions of the Catholic community, "True Catholics" accept the system where they must, as the alternative to what Carlyle terms "The tragedy of ignorance" And the strength of their convictions is amply evidenced by the extent and the duration of the sacrifices made by them to keep religion in its prescriptive and (to them) proper place in education. The school system built up and maintained by New Zealand Catholics is perhaps the most important external fact in the spiritual life of this Dominion.

Chapter XX.

CATHOLIC CHURCH AT HOKITIKA '70 - '80

THE ARRIVAL OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY,

NEED FOR RELIGIOUS TEACHERS.

The knowledge of God is of such importance that Jesus Christ came down upon earth to teach it to man. The Divine Saviour went on foot, from place to place, to cities, towns and villages to instruct, to catechise, and to preach his heavenly doctrine. Children, as well as adults, were the objects of His tender zeal. "Suffer little children to come to me", he said to his disciples, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven".

This method of teaching the Christian doctrine in a simple and familiar manner was learned from Jesus Christ and the Apostles by the Bishops, who, as fathers and pastors of the faithful, considered it their duty to catechise. As the faithful increased in numbers, the pastors were obliged by the force of circumstances, to confide this duty to others, but they were careful to appoint only the ablest and most virtuous people in their dioceses to discharge this sublime ministry.

Later, various societies were founded by the Church, whose chief aim was the instruction of youth in primary as well as in secondary schools. It was soon experienced that if these schools were to be useful to religion, their teachers must be apostles, not hirelings. To obtain such

teachers, various religious congregations of men and women were founded, among them that of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, which came into existence on the 12th. December, 1831. Its Foundress was Mother Mary Catherine McAuley, a gifted and accomplished woman who spent her large fortune in providing schools and homes for the poor children of Dublin City. Not only did she give her ample fortune, but she gave herself - self, the highest offering that the creature can make the Creator - when she made her vows to the Most High, thus binding herself for ever to "the service of the poor, sick and ignorant".

"The Sisters admitted to this Religious Congregation besides attending particularly to their own perfection, which is the principal end of all Religious Institutes, should also have in view what is the peculiar characteristic of this Congregation, i.e. the most assiduous application to the education of poor girls, the visitation of the sick, and the protection of poor women of good character."

Since the day of the institution of the Congregation, Convents of Mercy have been established all over the British Isles with an almost incredible rapidity. But the work entrusted to its members was not to be confined to the "sister kingdoms". It spread through the English speaking world, to Newfoundland, to the United States, to South America, to Canada, to the East Indies, to Australia, to Auckland, N.Z. in 1849, to Wellington N.Z. in 1861 -
 I.
 to all these before the Sisters answered the "Tui's silver call of the Westland wilds".

I. A native song bird.

Before Dean Martin, the parish priest of Hokitika, left "La belle France", he was well acquainted with the work of the various religious orders, and his zeal for the spiritual welfare of his people and his people's children led him to make his request to the Superioress of the Convent of Ennis, Co. Clare, Ireland, for a contingent of Sisters to labour in his parish.

When such petitions came from missionary lands, none was conscripted, all must be volunteers in the service of the Heavenly King. In fact, so many offered themselves that there was little difficulty experienced by those whose lot it was to pick and choose. On such a perilous mission, none but those of robust health were enrolled in Dean Martin's regiment.

I.
The contingent consisted of eight professed Sisters and two postulants ² - all in the bloom of youth and full of that generosity on which the exact observance of the religious life must needs make many demands, especially in such conditions as then existed on the West Coast. Mother Mary Vincent was then the Sister in charge in Ennis Convent, and the fifty "golden years" that have elapsed since the sad parting of the ten religious from their Convent home,

Notes:

I. Mothers M. Clare Moloney, Mechtildes Boland, Gabriel O'Kennedy, Aloysius McGrath, Cecilia Sheehan, Claver Ryan, and Srs. M. Juliana Ryan, and Angela O'Keefe.

2. Misses Maloney and Ryan, afterwards Mother M. Patrick and Sister M. Columba.

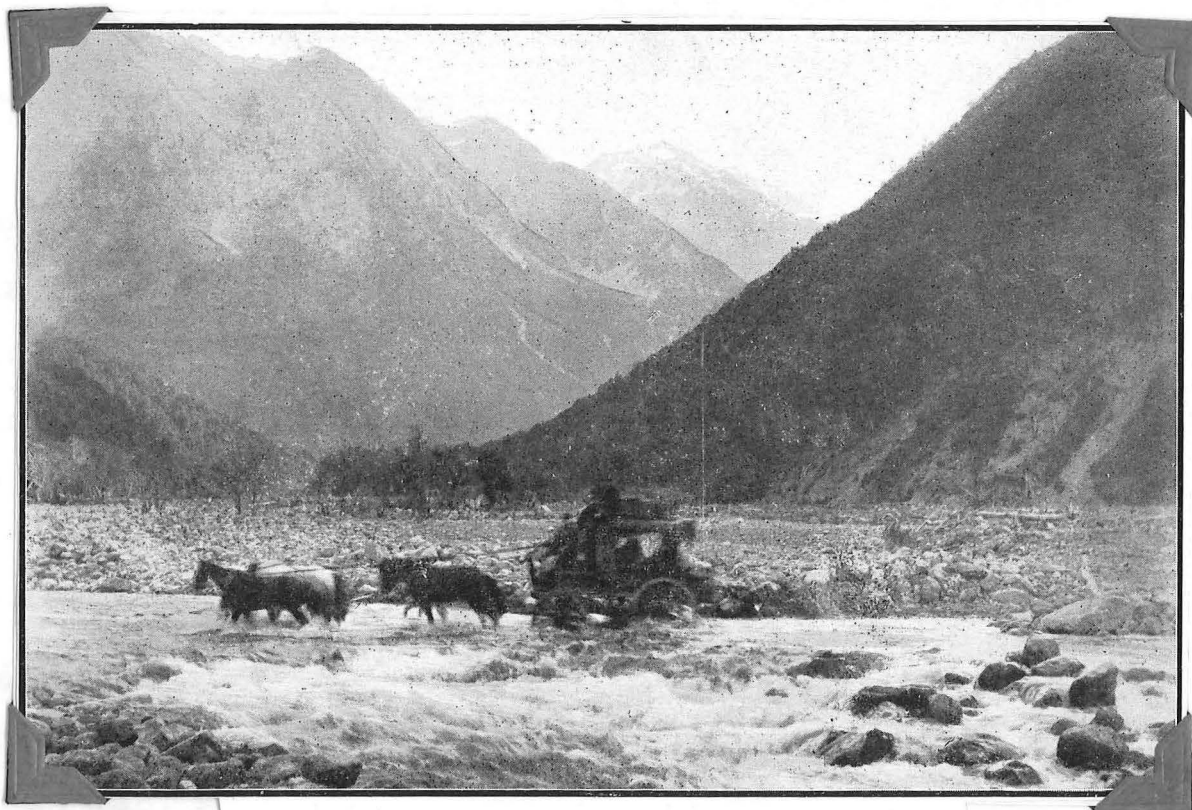
have shown that, in forming her missionary band, she chose aright. Of the ten who came, six are still living, some of whom God has blessed with wonderful strength and vitality, which still enable them to toil as unceasingly as they did on the 15th. October 1878, the memorable day when they first gazed on Hokitika, the "political" capital of Westland.

Never before or since did any missionaries receive a warmer welcome than did Mother Mary Clare, the Superioress, and her Sisters, from the good people of Hokitika. They used every means at their disposal to furnish a comfortable house which served as a temporary Convent, until the present building should be ready.

Soon after their arrival, the Sisters took charge of the Catholic School and began the visitation of the sick, and instruction of converts to the Catholic faith, as well as secondary works, viz., the teaching of music and painting, and other duties, to satisfy local needs.

It is an undeniable fact that the Sisters of Mercy have, in no small way, contributed to the building and extension of the Catholic Church in Westland. Strong faith in the Catholic religion they found in its pioneer people; it was their duty to preserve it in the future generations by teaching in their schools the religious and moral obligations which that religion imposed on all who belonged to the "household of the faith". That they have fulfilled the end for which they set out on their distant

mission is evidenced every Sabbath morning when the Catholic Churches of the Coast are thronged with worshippers whom neither summer sun nor winter blast can prevent from complying with this necessary condition of the love of God: "If you love Me," says Christ, "keep my commandments," and the third of these is "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day".



EARLY TRANSPORT CONDITIONS—A MAIL COACH ON THE OTIRA ROUTE.

Chapter XXI.

CHURCH PROGRESS AT GREYMOUTH 1880-1890.

Two important events mark this decade in the progress of the Catholic Church at Greymouth - the coming of the Sisters of Mercy and the erection of the present church.

Father Pat McGuinness, whom our Ross pioneer has described as "the light under a bushel", replaced Father Ecuyer in 1881. The "light of his lamp" continued to shine in Greymouth, and, in spite of delicate health, his labours for the salvation of souls were increasing. No one knew better the value of religious teachers in this work of soul-saving; consequently he made innumerable sacrifices to procure for his parish a "Colony" of Sisters of Mercy. In this he was ably supported by the good old pioneers, who, ever since the arrival of the Sisters in Hokitika, desired their coming to Greymouth almost as much as holy "Simeon desired to gaze on the Redeemer of mankind". The zealous pastor soon purchased a section from Mr. Masters in Alexander Street, two and a half acres picturesquely situated beneath a gently sloping hill and covered with virgin forest, the haunt of the chiming bell-bird and the silver-throated tui. Picturesque as was the plot, its native beauty must needs vanish under the stroke of the bushmen's axe, to make way for the site of the new Convent. The building fund for its erection was the next concern.

I.
The ladies on the Church Committee set to work, and during the first week as much as £1,368 was subscribed by the men and women of Greymouth. The total cost, £2000, did not entail much trouble in those days of generosity.

"A nicely designed, faithfully constructed and well appointed building"^{2.} was built, and furnished in conventual style.^{3.} "When all things were ready" the Sisters were invited, and on November 4th. 1882, Six Sisters with Mother Mary Machtildes as Superioress, came to Greymouth from Hokitika. On the following day, November 5th. 1882, the new Convent was blessed and formally opened by His Grace Archbishop Redwood, who with his usual eloquence preached the customary sermon, in the course of which he explained the principles of the religious life, the aims of religious orders in general, and those of the order of Mercy in particular. The Congregation present contributed £300. "The contributions came in with a freedom and liberality that is rather characteristic of our Roman Catholic brethren", writes the reporter of the Grey River Argus.

I. This Committee comprised, Mrs. Griffen, Mrs. McDonnell, Mrs. Sheedy, Mrs. O'Brien and Mrs. Martin Kennedy. It is interesting to record that each of these five zealous church-workers gave at a later date one or more of their family to the service of God. Six of Mrs. McDonnell's daughters entered the Order of Mercy, of which they are active and zealous members.

2. Grey River Argus, Nov. 6th. 1882.

3. The architect was Mr. Bissenhardt, and the contractor Mr. Alexander.

The Sisters took charge of the girls primary school and also opened a high school for the children of well to do parents. Soon they found their staff inadequate, and were forced to apply to their Mother House in Ennis for additional members.

In response to their appeal, two professed Sisters, and several young girls were sent out. This enabled them to open a boarding school and also a secondary school. The usual works of the Order were carried out - visitation of the sick and poor in their homes, and also in the hospital. For a few weeks after their arrival in the town, they were "the observed of all observers" and many, in fact most of the children, who had never before seen such strangely clad beings, were wont to assemble opposite the Convent to watch the "ladies in black and white" move in and out.

In 1884 several of their senior pupils from the secondary school entered on their term of probationership for the religious life. The dress worn during this term of course differed considerably from that of the Sisters who were finally professed. It consisted then as now of a small black cape, an old fashioned tulle cap covered with black net, which extended down the back almost to the waist. On one occasion a girl of sixteen summers, wearing this dress, accompanied two Sisters to the hospital. The presence of the postulant⁴ in the ward was the occasion of some consternation on the part of the inmates. One old man spoke to her in sympathetic tones, telling her how he

4. The first six months in a religious order is called the postulantship. The aspirant during this period is called a postulant.

shared her sorrow, and ended his discourse by saying "Now tell me, lady, is it long since you lost himself?" He mistook the unusual dress for that of a "widow's weeds". The hearty laugh of the young girl disabused him concerning his sorrow. The Sisters increased in numbers and in 1894, a contingent from Greymouth opened a Convent in Manchester St., Christchurch, where Bishop Grimes invited them to take charge of the schools in St. Mary's Parish.

In the beginning of 1884, Father McGuinness showed signs of failing health, and so he was transferred to Timaru on the East Coast, in the hope that a drier climate might effect a cure. But alas! with "work well done" and "crown well won", he died on the 29th. December of 1884 at Villa Maria, Sydney, whither he was forced to retire as an incurable invalid. Perhaps no better eulogium of this priestly priest exists than that which is repeatedly said by those who remember him, "He was a holy man".

His successor in Greymouth was Father Carew (later known as Dean Carew), who had been stationed in Reefton and who now came in the full strength and vigour of manhood to labour in the parish for a period of thirty four years. Loved and respected by the pioneers, his name was a household word throughout the parish, while the memory of his sayings is today still green in the minds of those who were wont to sit and listen to his homely, instructive sermons.

He was not long stationed in Greymouth before he realized the necessity of having a much larger church,

as the population of the town was increasing, in spite of the fact that the gold was decreasing. As the various "diggings" declined, the greater part of the population betook itself to the two principal centres - Greymouth and Hokitika. Very few families remained in the creeks and gullies, which became deserted spots, save for the lone bachelor, who was loath to depart while the sands glittered in the sunshine.

For this reason the work of the parish priests at Greymouth and Hokitika was after the gold rush, much less arduous than was that of the pastors in Ahaura, Ross and Kumara, in which parishes most of the "declining fields" were included.

The generosity of the diggers did not decline in proportion with the output of gold. While there was a church to be built they tarried not to invest in God's house, even though for some it might mean the "last copper". The "leader" of the Grey River Argus of May 5th. 1888, says, "Wherever a few Roman Catholics (and especially if they are Irish Catholics) are gathered together, there will be erected a Catholic Church, and if the conditions are at all favourable, this house of prayer will usually be found to be one of the architectural ornaments of the place."

Father Carew, with the support of the leading Catholics, purchased for £1000, a section in Chapel Street, adjoining the section in Alexander Street on which stood the Convent and Girls' School. Arrangements were then commenced, and in a short time the funds promised so well that Father Carew was induced to begin operations.

Mr. Petie of Dunedin, and built by The new building designed by Messrs Arnott and Seabrook remained for many years without an equal in respect of material and workmanship.

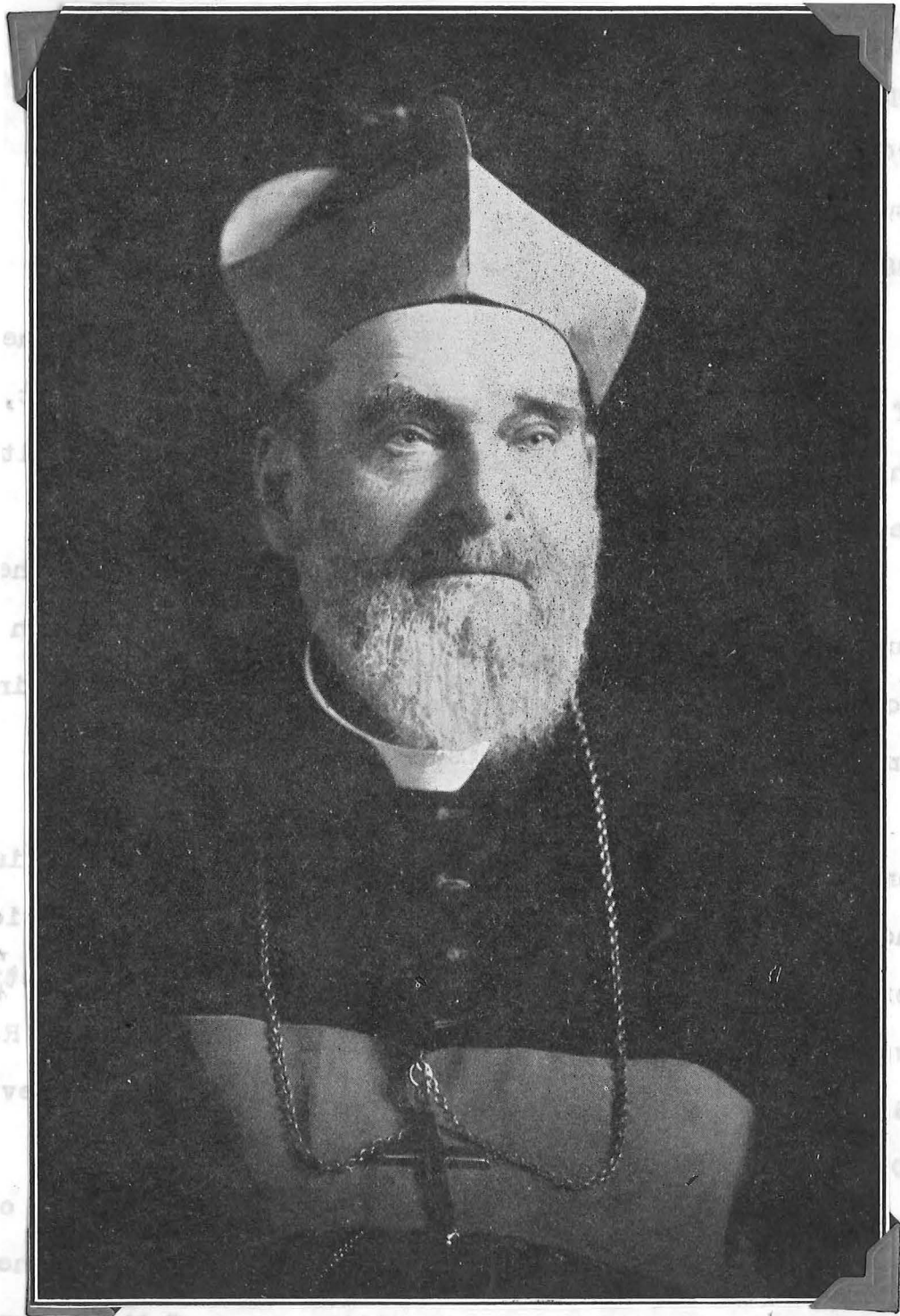
In 1888 Canterbury and Westland were formed into the Diocese of Christchurch, and Bishop Grimes was appointed the first Bishop. The last official act of Archbishop Redwood in Westland was the laying of the foundation stone of St. Patrick's new church on April 17th., 1887.

A record of the time says:-

"The ground plan of the church is in the form of the Latin cross. The extreme length is 150 feet, while inside, allowing for the tower and Sanctuary, it will be 100 ft. The nave will be 42 ft. wide".

In the light of the present day, a rather quaint feature of the ceremony was the laying beneath the foundation stone a parchment bearing the following, in English and Latin:-

"To the honor and glory of the eternal omnipotent God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and of His holy Son, Jesus Christ our Redeemer. This foundation stone of the Church of St. Patrick's, designed by Frank Petie Esq., was blessed and laid today by the most Rev. Francis Redwood, S.M. (Society of Mary), Bishop of Wellington, the Rev. Denis Carew, S.M., being rector of Greymouth in the pontificate of Pope Leo the XIII, in the 14th. year of the most Rev. Francis Redwood's administration of the Diocese of Wellington; in the 49th. year of the reign of Queen Victoria, Sir William Jervois being Governor General,



Archbishop Redwood

and Sir Robert Stout, Premier of New Zealand".

A copy of each of the local newspapers - Argus and Star - with a specimen of each of the current coins of the realm - sovereign, half-sovereign and down to a penny; also the photos of Pope Leo XIII, Bishop Redwood and Father Carew were placed underneath the stone, which bore the following inscription:- "Benedictus et positus a Francisco Episcopo Wellingtonensi die decima septema Aprilis A.D. 1887".

During the course of his sermon, Bishop Redwood said that he would not trespass on the men of Greymouth by making an appeal to them. He had by experience learnt the nature of the people of the West Coast, and that there was no audience in the whole of New Zealand that he ever addressed with so much pleasure, as the people of the West Coast.

Mr. Martin Kennedy donated the bricks, costing £400, Mr. Felix Campbell gave £300 at the laying of the Foundation Stone, Mr. Griffen gave £60, Maurice O'Connor £50, Dr. Smith £50, D. Sheedy £60, Mr. Kane £60, Daniel McKendry £50, Mr. McDonnell £60, Mr. Dupre £30, John Griffen £20, Bishop Redwood £25; other smaller donations from people to whom giving meant more than to the above gentlemen, amounted to £170.

The new bishop, John Joseph Grimes, was born in England in 1842. He became a professed religious in the Society of Mary in 1867, and was ordained priest at Paignton. He was consecrated 1st. Bishop of Christchurch diocese in London in 1887 and arrived in the "city of the

plains" early in the following year.

His first visit to the Coast was on May 20th. 1888, when he blessed and formally opened the new church. The members of the church committee gave him, on behalf of the parishioners, a most cordial welcome, and numerous addresses were presented, and His Lordship, after the celebration of High Mass, preached an eloquent sermon, taking for his text the first few verses of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, "And when the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in one place". A collection was then made with the result that £400 were added to the fund. The total cost of St. Patrick's Church was £5000.

Two smaller churches were built during this period - one at Barrytown (Cane Creek), which had hitherto received monthly visits from Father Rolland, of the Ahaura Parish, and the other at Brunnerton. The church at Barrytown was built in 1881, and during the building process it was humorously stated in a "local" that the carpenters "struck oil". A five gallon tin of boiled oil disappeared during the night. The first marriage was celebrated at Barrytown in the new church May 28th. 1881, all former similar events having been celebrated at Greymouth. "The time honoured custom of 'tin-kettling' was duly carried out in the latter part of the evening, when the otherwise calm night was made hideous by the united efforts of about a score of performers, principally juveniles, on a number of empty kerosene tins, assisted by a concertina. The Bridegroom

duly regaled this amateur band and thereby effectually stopped the music".

BRUNNER.

This township owed its existence to the presence of the coal seam, discovered by the famous pioneer explorer, Thomas Brunner, Surveyor to the New Zealand Company. It is situated about eight miles from Greymouth, and was for long the home of a charming people. Itⁱⁿ many ways it has been by far the most interesting of the minor centres, and like Kumara was the scene of many days of mirth and gladness. No more faithful, generous people, or no more devoted Catholics ever filled a church than were those of the Brunner township, in its "palmy days". They built their church, which was opened in May 1889, and, thanks to Mr. Creagh, the Chairman and Secretary of their committee, full records of their business transactions are in existence. No other Catholic centre has kept its records with such accuracy, and if ever greatness is thrust upon Brunner in the shape of hidden treasure, its future historian will find little difficulty in compiling his chapters on the work of the Catholic Church.

Soon after the opening of the Church, the Sisters of Mercy were invited to take charge of a school there, the classes being held in the church, until the school was built and furnished. Nowhere were the Sisters more at home than in the congenial atmosphere of the Brunner people. Both teachers and pupils have the

most pleasant recollections of the early days in this township, of the great concerts given in aid of the Church and school, and of the various performers "the like of whom have never since been seen."

Those Sisters who were teaching in Brunner during the awful explosion of March 26th. 1896, when sixty five men were entombed in a coal mine, "did much to assuage the sufferings of their relatives".

In the parish of Ahaura, two new churches were opened during this decade, one at Totara Flat and another at Blackball. Both were built by Father O'Donnell, whom the annals of his time describe as a most zealous and energetic priest. A local in "The Argus" 1886, says, "A light glimmers in Father O'Donnell, who is ever about, energetic, good looking, owns good horses and knows how to sit them".

Father O'Donnell also built a beautiful presbytery at the Ahaura, which in those days, 1886, had not its compeer in the diocese - "the admiration of strangers, the boasted pride of the people around". We should have mentioned in speaking of Brunner, that at first, it was included in the Ahaura parish, but as the township grew larger, it was incorporated in the Greymouth parish, in exchange for Marsden, which was added to the Ahaura parish.

The Church at Totara Flat was opened and consecrated by Archbishop Redwood on June 13th. 1886. It is situated in a farming district; for long before this date, the "golden days" of the Grey Valley had passed away.

The site was given by Henry Magill. From first to last, from the supervision of the erection of the building to the thousand details connected with the raising of money, all the success was due to the efforts of Father O'Donnell.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MARIST BROTHERS COME TO GREYMOUTH.

"Talents angel bright,
If wanting worth and shining instruments
In false ambition's hand to finish faults
Illustrious, and give infamy renown".¹

Young.

While talents and ability are necessary to every Christian teacher, moral excellency is a most essential factor. "Moral education," says Bishop Spalding "is the development of individuality and individuality cannot be developed by formulas and mechanical processes; it is the work of the master who brings to his task a genuine and living interest in the individual".

No one better appreciated moral excellence in his teachers than did the founder of the Congregation of the Marist Brothers. Father Champagnat who at all times tried to impress on his spiritual children that the education of youth was not a trade, but a religious ministry and a true apostolate.

This holy priest was born on the 20th. May 1788 at Marlhee, a village en Roant dila, in the Department of the Loire, diocese of Lyons. On July 22nd., 1816 he was ordained priest with ten others of his companions. Savalla, a small village hidden away in one of the gorges of the Mountains of dila, sixty miles from Lyons, was his first mission. During the exercise of his Sacred Ministry, an incident occurred which showed him the

1. "Right Thought".

2. "Life and Spirit of J.M. Champagnat". 1887, London.

necessity of the existence of a body of young men who would willingly and generously sacrifice the pleasures of life for the salvation of souls and so devote themselves to the work of Christian education.

One evening he was called to attend a young boy, whom he found on the brink of eternity without any knowledge of the God Who made him. During the few days that remained to the poor sufferer, Father Champagnat gently instructed him in the principles of Christianity. The incident at the death bed of the dying youth in the sequestered village of Lavalla was the means of adding to the Catholic Church a Congregation of religious which later was destined to instruct the youth of cultured and savage nations not only in human knowledge, but in the highest form of knowledge which, according to the words of Saint Paul, consists "in knowing Christ and Him crucified".

Father Champagnat made known his pious design to certain young men of his parish, to men, who in his opinion were possessed of the necessary strength of mind and body and to men generous enough to leave home and friends to follow in the footsteps of the first and greatest of all missionary teachers.-- "the Son of Man who hath not where to lay His Head".

With the zeal of an apostle, the founder set about providing a training establishment for the numerous volunteers who offered to share in the good work. The saving Sign of the Cross was not wanting to the infant society, but the Lord of all, was ever there to

1.

"Guard it with His sword
Swift and sharp and bright".

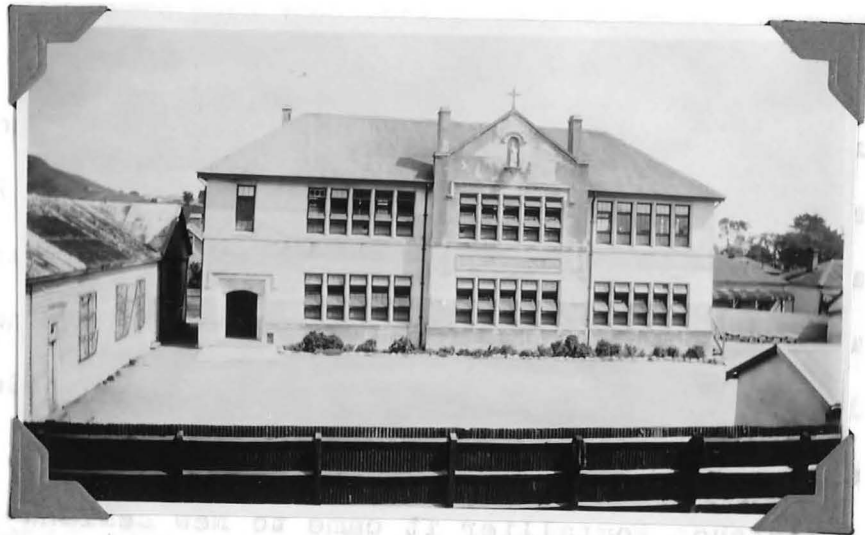
But the activities of this Congregation must not be confined to "fair France", it must go forth to the icy plains of Canada; to the crowded cities of the United States; to the plateaux of the Andes; to the Scottish Highlands; to Ireland, fast friend of France; to the karoos of South Africa and even down the marches of Cathay".

With Bishop Pompallier it came to New Zealand in the person of Brother Michael Colomban who helped in converting the Maoris to the True Faith. In 1876 the scholastic work of the Brothers in New Zealand was commenced at Wellington. To Napier the Brothers came in 1878, later to Auckland and Christchurch and to Greymouth in 1892. Dean Carew, who was then in charge of the Greymouth Parish, became acquainted with the work of the Brothers in Christchurch and desired them to take charge of the Boys' School. Preparations were made by the parishioners who welcomed those religious men as the guardians of the spiritual welfare of their sons, as teachers who would develop not only the moral and religious faculties of their children but also the physical and intellectual and finally as exemplars of the teaching of Him who said "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not".

Each year found an increase in the roll number of the Boys' School and each year numbers of their pupils went forth to take

1.

Charles Beeching "Prayers".



Marist Brothers' School Greymouth.



Convent High and Boarding School

up positions of trust in various parts of New Zealand. In 1924 the old wooden school that did duty from the beginning gave place to the present two-storey building in which ample provision was made for a Secondary school which, equipped modern apparatus by the present scholarly pastor, and guided by the present cultured Rector now bids fair to be counted among the chief secondary schools in New Zealand.

Preparations are now being made for the erection of a new residence for the Brothers and at no distant date under more suitable surroundings they will as before serve their God.

" As yeomen serve a knight
His steady stay in fight ".

"The Marist Brothers". - Eileen Duggan in Jubilee Journal 1927.

CHAPTER XIII.

LIFE AND LABOURS OF FATHER TOM WALSH.

Saint Paul when writing to the Corinthians was forced to commend himself and his labours lest these, his recent converts to the Christian faith should be imposed upon by false apostles. He says "They are the *ministers* of Christ; (I speak as one less wise) I am more; in many more labours, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often.

What the great Apostle of the Gentiles said of his labours could be said in truth by this humble priest of his labours in the Westland wilds. He could have said too, " I have laboured more than all these " laboured more than any other minister of the Gospel ever laboured on the West Coast. But this any, humble man would not dare to think such thoughts much less to express them. Necessity did not demand it as in the case of Saint Paul, the flock he tended knew full well what burdens had been borne by their shepherd in the discharge of his sacred duty, knew too, that he would rejoice more to have his name written in the "Book of Life" than in the passing pages of the "Daily Times". A link for many years between a past and a present generation he stood as a symbol of all that was best in the one and a model of all that was self-sacrificing to

1.

Second Epistle to the Corinthians Chapter XI. Verse 23.

the levities of the other.

Father Walshe was born in County Milkenney, Ireland in 1843,. At an early age he felt the call of the priesthood, and he repaired to "All Hallows" College, Dublin to pursue his studies. While there he met Bishop Pompallier of Auckland, who was at the time making a tour of Ireland in quest of priests and students for his vast diocese. Amongst those who volunteered for this distant mission were six students already in minor orders, two of whom were destined to lead long lives in their adopted country. Father O'Reilly in Auckland, Father Walshe on the West Coast.

In 1864 they arrived in Auckland and as the Bishop had great difficulty in finding male teachers for his Boys' schools, all the students had to devote some time to school teaching and continue between their school duties the further studies requisite for the priesthood.

In 1866 the members of this band were ordained in Auckland - There was the first ordination to the Catholic priesthood in New Zealand - and they immediately commenced parochial work. Just then Bishop Viard of Wellington, stood in great need of priests and Father Walshe was sent down to take up duties in the city of Wellington. Almost at the same time petitions for priests were coming from the West Coast gold-fields and Father Walshe volunteered for work on the "diggings".

We have seen that Greymouth was the scene of his first labours where he assisted Father Royer for some-time until he was appointed parish priest of Brighton: a township forty miles north of Greymouth which in later years became the southern boundary of his extensive parish. From Brighton he blazed the track to Charleston where there was another "diggings". Native bush covered the land almost to the sea and his first journeys along the beach were made partly on foot and partly on hands and feet. By holding on to the sticky stems of hardy shrubs he was enabled to pass over huge precipices and in the hollows of the rocks he often found a place to stretch his weary bones and snatch a few hours sleep. At Charleston he established a Catholic School and he also built a Catholic Church at Brighton, at Charleston, then at Addison's Flat and lastly at Westport where a church was opened on the 17th., March, 1867. Thus in less than a space of two years he had built four churches and one school. Later he built churches at Granity, Hillerton, Denniston, Wainangaroa, Cape Bougain. Between these centres there were no roads, no bridges, not even saddle tracks in some places and yet to each and all Father Walsh paid a monthly visit. Rising early each Sunday morning he said Mass at one of these centres, and then trudged to another where he said another Mass sometimes as late as at 11.30 A.M. Religious instruction of the children followed, baptisms were administered and F.A. found him eating his frugal

breakfast.

At each centre some "old-timer" carried his bag; at Brighton, it was Tom Nevin, who was styled the "curate" of Brighton. Tom was always ready to give the latest news in church progress to Father Walshe when the latter arrived in Brighton. Sometimes Tom was not as good as he might be during the absence of the pastor, and Tom knew too, that some of the neighbours would not be slow to inform on him. Self accusation he thought would be the surest way of obtaining pardon so as soon as he would see Father Walshe appear, he would cry out "Bad boy! I have been a bad boy again! Promises of reform quickly followed and Tom was able to continue his labour of love.

It often happened that owing to the uncertain modes of travelling in the early days Father Walshe was unable to attend the annual retreat² for the clergy at Wellington. On such occasions this holy man betook himself to some sequestered spot where his Soul could commune with God in silent prayer mindful of the words of St. Paul "Lest when I have preached to others, I myself might become a castaway".

Fast friend to the poor and afflicted he shunned publicity, which he was wont to consider as the greatest obstacle to the discharge of his priestly duties.

2.

A certain period in each year set apart for the personal sanctification of the Catholic clergy.

Six years before his death, he reluctantly resigned his arduous duties of parish priest and took up his abode in the retirement of the O'Connor Home, Westport. Here, his useful life closed on the 12th December 1926, at the ripe old age of 83. Here died "a great High Priest", who in his day pleased God and was found just and in time of wrath was made a reconciliation*.

3.

Ecclesiasticus. G LV. *(The Book of the Wisdom of Solomon)*



Catholic Church and Convent School, Cobden • V

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN LATER DAYS - 1890.

"Another generation has arisen in the land,
New notions are the order of the day;
Men now live by their wits, Tom, dress fine and do the grand,
For the age of diggers' shirts has passed away" 1.

Don. C. C. Regan.

We have now reached a time when many of those centres of vast population are about to wane, to become deserted spots - striking contrasts to those human haunts of a hale and hearty people who sought "this land of gold beyond the sea".

Gone is the gold and with it the laughter for naught remains to provide occupation for those diggers in the lone valleys where Mother Earth has been disembowelled of its gilded treasure, - the refuse remaining in the form of huge moss-covered boulders - cairns to mark the place whence fled the spirit of "the god of gold".

Many a digger who spent the hey day of his life in winding creeks or windy gullies goes hence to seek in other fields a less luring but more stable occupation "While soon scatters far and wide the gallant stayer old".

But the east coast is not destined to relapse into a state of wilderness. She has still her treasures, her forests remain to supply building material for ages yet to come.

1. "In later days".

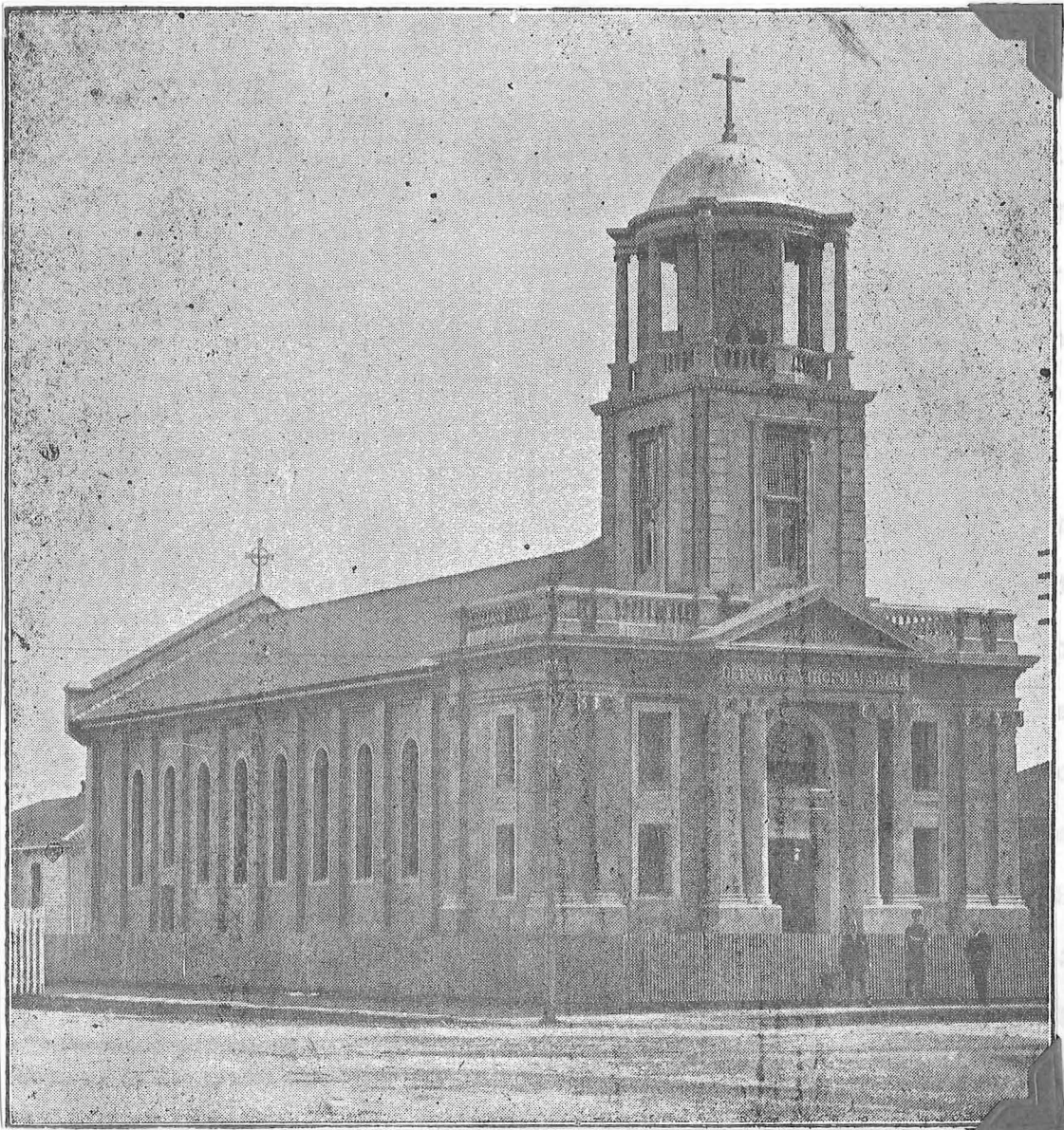
Even in the "days of the rush" many of the pioneers preferred wielding the axe in felling forest giants to standing in mountain mud and "cradling" the shifting sands for glittering gold. Others among them made the roads, built the bridges and cultivated the virgin soil. Thanks to these if now "There is green grass there where men may be at rest."

"And the thrushes are in song there, fluting from the nest"

Another resource has now come into play - a natural resource that will remain when the gold is all won and the timber is all cut. She has yet her inexhaustible supplies of coal. We have seen that in the early sixties a coal seam was discovered at Brunner. The twenty-seven tons of coal that were produced then for the Nelson government were destined to be the fore-runner of many a million. Rich seams of coal existed at several places. Perhaps the most daring experimental legislative enactment of the Seddon government³ was the creation of State Collieries. In the year 1903 the Government commenced operations at Dunollie (four miles distant from the town of Greymouth.) on what was known as the Point Elizabeth seam with the result that excellent household coal was produced in large quantities. An up-to-date plant was installed and the output increased rapidly until at one period it averaged

3.

Richard John Seddon was Prime Minister of New Zealand from May 1893 until his death in June 1906.



Catholic Church Hokitika

one thousand tons per day.

With such promise of future success Mr. Seddon decided to build a state township at Runanga⁴ about ten minutes walk from Dunollie. Sections were made available to the miners at the lowest possible prices, timber for the houses was procured at the state saw-mill and soon a thriving population of sixteen hundred took its stand in the most prosperous mining centre of Westland.

Satisfied with the success of the first colliery, the government opened another colliery and yet another higher up the valley and yet there remain coal seams untouched.

"The Catholic Church ever to the fore was one of the first buildings erected in Dunollie", says an old pioneer.

Mass was celebrated there every Sunday by one of the priests from Greymouth and in 1912 was opened a Catholic School at Runanga where four Sisters of Mercy from the Greymouth Convent travel by train each day. The miners are most appreciative of the work of the Sisters in educating their children and the school is attended by almost as many non-catholic as Catholic children while the liberal support offered by all parents is equalled nowhere else in New Zealand.

In 1911 a Catholic Church was built at Cobden, a township on the borders of Greymouth and in the same year

4. Runanga in Maori - social hall.
5. Mr. Millar - Runanga.



ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH ROSS

B.T. 125

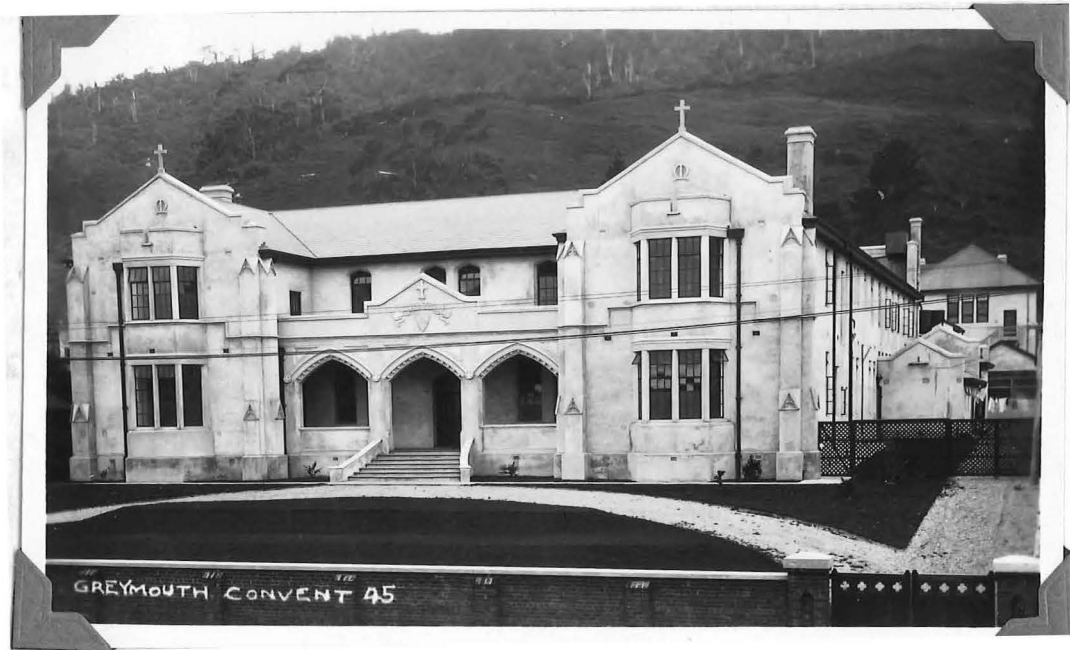
a Catholic school was opened there. In 1920 the Catholic School at Brunner was closed owing to many of the residents being forced to leave through unemployment.

The other parishes on the Coast have not maintained their population nearly so well as has the parish of Greymouth. Nevertheless, Convents were opened at Kumara and Ross where the Sisters of Mercy conduct the Catholic schools, but of course, on very economical lines.

A fine new presbytery was built at Ross by Father Hyland in the early nineties. This priest famous for his zeal in the care of souls laboured like another Saint Paul in perils by water and in perils by land during his long visits to South Westland where he went several times a year for the purpose of instructing children in religious doctrine.

His successor, Father Pogue became like Father Columb a martyr in the cause of charity. On one of his visits to the South he was hemmed in by floods and spent an entire night in battling with the current. While he was attempting to cross the river, darkness closed on him, and he was left to struggle with fate. As a result of this awful experience, he caught a cold which proved fatal and in May 1903 worn out with suffering he passed to his reward.

Catholic Press



Catholic Presbytery Hokitika

A new church and presbytery have been built at Hokitika, a new presbytery at Kumara and at Greymouth a new Convent at the cost of thirty thousand pounds.

Now whence comes the money to erect those buildings of the Catholic Church? Is it the gift of the man of wealth and fortune who gives out of his abundance? No for the West Coast is not favoured with men of great riches. Some large donations have been bequeathed not for the erection of churches but rather for the beautifying of their interior.

Is it from the income derived from property acquired cheaply in days of old? The Catholic Church in Westland possesses no income-producing property. No. Catholic churches and Catholic schools are built and maintained chiefly by the earnings of artisans and labourers. Just as the home of the Holy Family at Nazareth was maintained by the labour of a humble carpenter so the Church of the "Holy One of Nazareth" is essentially maintained by His poor, whom He says we have always with us.

Now why such liberality on the part of the poor? Well, there is nothing great or good or beautiful or dear to man or nation which does not draw its life-draughts from wisdom's roots. Hence all this outward progress of the Catholic Church and Convent which like a forest of emblems like a dreamland of delightful shapes gladdens the land with

Sacred gifts as the daisies spread their white clusters over the green of the grass, is only dear because it is a sign of a true and holy motive which speaks its meaning in sturdy stone and stately steeple. No power on earth can wither the patient and persistent presence of a true and holy cause. No wisdom of earth can dwarf the progress of God's wisdom that is rooted in an honourable people.